Morgana

A Tragedy in Five Acts

by Chris A. Tsirkas

The truth behind Camelot's fall, told by the woman Myth painted as villain.
When old magic meets new faith, a sister's love becomes a kingdom's undoing.

Morgana

A Tragedy in Five Acts

In this powerful reimagining of Arthurian legend, “Morgana” reveals the untold story of Arthur’s sister —not as the villain History remembers, but as a priestess of the Old Ways, caught in a changing world. Arriving at Camelot to bridge the divide between ancient wisdom and new faith, Morgana discovers that her brother’s celebrated kingdom stands on a foundation of secrets and manipulation. As she works to heal the growing rifts in Britain’s soul, she must confront Merlin’s schemes, protect her hidden son Mordred, and prevent a prophecy of mutual destruction which seeks to claim both her brother and child. This Shakespearean tragedy explores how the suppression of truth —about Mordred's birth, Excalibur’s healing scabbard and Arthur’s own magical origins— ultimately dooms Camelot’s golden dream. Through Morgana’s eyes, we witness a family torn apart by forces larger than themselves and a kingdom that fell not because of evil —but because it failed to reconcile the old wisdom with the new.

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- Core narrative elements from the Arthurian tradition: The Round Table, Excalibur, Camelot, Avalon, the conflict between Christianity and pagan traditions, the love affair between Guinevere and Lancelot, the fall of Camelot, and Arthur's final journey to Avalon.
- Traditional plot points: Uther’s deception to conceive Arthur, the drawing of the Excalibur sword from the rock, the founding of the Round Table, the search for the Holy Grail, the relationship between Mordred and Arthur, and their final battle.
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- The specific portrayal of Merlin as deliberately manipulating events to serve his vision of progress.

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Preface

In the vast tapestry of Arthurian legend, few figures have been as consistently misunderstood and maligned as Morgana, sister to the legendary King Arthur. Traditional tellings have relegated her to the role of antagonist —a dark enchantress working against the "noble aims" of Camelot, a witch whose Magic threatens the Christian Order that Arthur supposedly championed.

This play seeks to challenge that narrow characterization, by giving voice to a woman caught between Worlds, in a time of profound cultural transition. As Britain stood at the crossroads between its ancient pagan traditions and the emerging dominance of Christianity, Morgana embodied the struggle to preserve invaluable indigenous wisdom, while acknowledging the inexorable tide of Change.

"*Morgana: A Tragedy in Five Acts*" reimagines this pivotal figure not as Arthur's nemesis, but as a woman of profound complexity —a priestess, a healer, a sister, and ultimately a mother whose love for both her brother and her son drove her actions far more than any lust for power or vengeance. In doing so, it interrogates the very foundations of Arthurian myth, asking whose perspectives have been privileged in the telling and whose have been silenced.

The tragedy that unfolds reveals how Merlin —often portrayed as the benevolent architect of Arthur's reign— may have manipulated events, to serve a vision of progress that required the suppression of ancient ways. It explores how Arthur's celebrated kingdom, for all its idealism, was built upon secrets and deceptions that ultimately proved its undoing. And it examines how Mordred, traditionally cast as the villain who brought down Camelot, might instead have been another victim of forces beyond his control —a young man denied his heritage and identity, until truth erupted in violence.

At its heart, this play asks us to consider that History, like Legend, is written by the victors. The Christianity that eventually dominated Britain had little interest in preserving a sympathetic account of the priestesses who maintained the Old Religion. In giving Morgana the opportunity to tell her own story, I hope to illuminate how easily women of power and agency can be transformed into villains, when their narratives are written by those who fear or misunderstand them.

I invite readers and potential performers to approach this text with an open mind —to see in Morgana not the enchantress dark of medieval romance, but a woman of principle caught in the machinery of Fate and political transformation; who fought to reconcile opposing Worlds, even as they tore apart the family she loved.

The tragedy of Camelot was not simply the fall of a noble political and social experiment, but the failure to achieve true synthesis between old wisdom and new ideals. In that failure, perhaps, lies a lesson for our own divided times.

In crafting this work in the style of Shakespeare's historical tragedies, I have attempted to honor both the grandeur of Arthurian legend and the very human stories at its core. While the language echoes the Elizabethan era, the verse tends toward blank verse, allowing for a more fluid and natural expression. Yet the themes —the tension between tradition and progress, the price of power, the consequences of denied truths, and the complex bonds of family— remain profoundly relevant to our contemporary world.

While “*Morgana*" adopts Shakespearean blank verse as its poetic medium, it deliberately departs from certain Shakespearean conventions, to create a dramatic experience that more closely aligns with the structures and sensibilities of Attic tragedy. These deviations are not oversights but conscious artistic choices that serve the play’s thematic concerns and dramatic focus.

Unlike Shakespeare’s historical plays, which often feature sprawling casts and multiple subplot lines, “*Morgana*” maintains a tighter dramatic focus, reminiscent of Attic Tragedy. The narrative centers on a single, powerful conflict —the tension between ancient pagan wisdom and emergent Christian values—, without the diversionary comic relief or secondary storylines typical of Elizabethan drama. This concentrated approach allows for a deeper exploration of the central philosophical and spiritual questions at the heart of Arthur’s failing kingdom.

The play’s formal framing devices —particularly the Prologue and Epilogue featuring Morgan le Fey as narrator and witness— draw more from the tradition of Greek Chorus than Shakespearean convention. Like the Chorus in works by Euripides, these sections provide context, offer judgment, and create emotional distance that invites reflection rather than mere catharsis.

Perhaps most significantly, “*Morgana*” places a female protagonist at its center throughout the entire drama, following her complete tragic arc from hopeful intervention to resigned witness of devastation. While Shakespeare created memorable female characters, they rarely serve as the sustained focus and moral center of his tragedies. Here, Morgana’s perspective governs our understanding of events, reminiscent of how Euripides centered marginalized figures in plays like “*Medea*” and “*The Trojan Women*”.

The linguistic register of this play also represents a deliberate departure from Shakespearean practice. Where Shakespeare often distinguished between characters of different social classes through varied speech patterns —nobles speaking in verse, while commoners using prose—, “*Morgana*" maintains a more consistent elevated language across characters, similar to the universal formal speech in Attic Tragedy. This choice underscores the play’s concern with fundamental questions of wisdom, power, and belief that transcend social distinction.

The cyclical understanding of Time embedded in the play’s structure —beginning with Morgan le Fey looking back, and ending with the promise of Arthur's eventual return— also finds closer kinship with Greek tragic sensibilities than with the more linear historical progression typical of Shakespeare's histories and tragedies.

The play's treatment of Fate, prophecy, and human choice also draws deeply from the wellspring of Attic Tragedy rather than Shakespearean tradition. Where Shakespeare's characters often struggle against personal flaws or political machinations, “*Morgana*” presents its protagonists confronting an inexorable Destiny that has been foretold, yet might still be altered through Wisdom and Sacrifice. Like in Sophocles' "*Oedipus Rex*" or Aeschylus' "*Oresteia*," prophecies in this play function not merely as plot devices but as manifestations of a Cosmic Order that both transcends and encompasses human agency. Morgana's desperate attempt to avert the prophesied mutual destruction of Arthur and Mordred echoes the Greek tragic tradition, where characters simultaneously resist and fulfill their fated ends. Her awareness that "*Prophecy shows possible, not certain paths*" introduces a distinctly Euripidean complexity to the concept of destiny —suggesting that Fate operates not as rigid determinism but as pattern and tendency, which human choices can influence but rarely completely

overcome. This tension between Destiny and Free Will creates a more profound tragic resonance than typically found in Shakespeare's works, where tragedy often stems from character rather than cosmic necessity.

These formal choices serve to create a dramatic experience that honors both traditions while establishing its own unique approach to the Arthurian material —one that seeks to excavate deeper philosophical questions about the cost of progress, the suppression of indigenous wisdom, and the tragic consequences of divided loyalties.

A note on language: While this play draws inspiration from Shakespearean versification, it deliberately employs a more accessible verse structure than strict Elizabethan practice, trying to adhere to the austere clarity of Attic Tragedy. Rather than attempting a pure Shakespearean reproduction (for the completion of which my language expertise would not suffice, anyway), the verse here serves the dramatic substance first —maintaining elevated diction, while stripping away excessive ornamentation that might obscure the fundamental tragic arc. This economy of language draws more from the Greek tradition than the Elizabethan, valuing precision and emotional impact over elaborate wordplay. The result is a poetic form which aims to honor both lineages, while creating a distinct vocal appropriation.

Dramatis Personae

MORGANA, sister to Arthur, skilled in ancient arts, Keeper of the Old Ways who maintains vigil over Avalon.

MORGAN LE FEY, future aspect of Morgana (appears in the Prologue and Epilogue).

ARTHUR, King of Britain.

MERLIN, a sorcerer and counselor to Arthur.

NIMUE, current “Lady of the Lake”.

VIVIANE, an elder High Priestess of Avalon, "Lady of the Lake" before Nimue, and mentor to Morgana.

GUINEVERE, wife to Arthur.

LANCELOT, Knight of the Round Table.

MORDRED, young son to Morgana.

GAWAIN, Knight of the Round Table.

SIR KAY, foster brother to Arthur.

AELLE, a Saxon chieftain.

SAXON LIEUTENANT, officer to Aelle.

Lords & Ladies (in the Court scenes), Ladies (Guinevere’s Attendants), Knights, Priestesses, Servants (as Messengers and in secondary roles), and Soldiers.

PROLOGUE

Time: the present. A circular stone chamber in Avalon. Moonlight filters through an opening in the ceiling, illuminating a central altar stone. MORGAN LE FEY —a future aspect of MORGANA as she appears in this play—, aged, stands before a pool of water. Three hooded PRIESTESSES form a triangle around her. MORGAN LE FEY is looking back at her own past as MORGANA.

MORGAN LE FEY:
Attend me, Sisters of the Sacred Isle,
As Memory's veil parts like the morning mist.
I stand before you, not as Legend paints
—"Enchantress dark", or "witch of vengeful spite"—,
But as I was: a woman caught between
Two worlds that could not peacefully coexist.
The bards and monks, who write of Camelot,
Have twisted truth to serve their present needs:
Made villain of the voice that sought to heal;
Made evil of the Ancient Ways we kept.
Tonight, beneath Diana's watchful gaze,
I shall unwind the tapestry of lies,
And show the pattern as it truly formed.

She passes her hand over the pool. The water begins to glow.

FIRST PRIESTESS:
Speak, Lady of the Lake's appointed heir.
We, who guard the Old Ways still, would hear
The truth behind the Christian chroniclers' tales.

SECOND PRIESTESS:
Show us Arthur, as he truly was:
Not saint, but man of flesh and mortal flaw.

THIRD PRIESTESS:
Reveal the role of Merlin in this Fall:
His schemes that set the kingdom's course toward ruin.

MORGAN LE FEY:
(Looking into the glowing pool)
I see it all, as clearly as yesterday:
My brother's golden Court; his shining dream;

The Knights whose valor lives in endless song.
I see the sword that symbolized his right
—The sacred scabbard, though, hidden from his grasp.
I see my son, born of union blessed yet cursed:
A child of powers neither understood.
And I see myself, younger, filled with hope
That Old and New might find their common ground
—That Arthur's vision might embrace all wisdom,
Not just the narrow path that Rome prescribed.

The water in the pool swirls, creating images only they can see.

MORGAN LE FEY:
So much blood; so many dreams undone.
A kingdom built on secrets, could not stand.
The Round Table, that emblem of equality,
Shattered by the very human hearts
That swore impossible oaths upon its crystal sheen.
I sought to save, not destroy my brother's work;
To add the depth his vision sorely lacked.
For, what is Justice without Wisdom's root?
What power endures without Nature's blessing?
What throne stands firm on foundation split?

She dips her fingers in the water, causing ripples to spread.

MORGAN LE FEY:
Witness now the truth behind the legend
—The human story veiled by Myth's thick cloak.
See how I journeyed to my brother's Court,
A priestess seeking bridge where chasm gaped.
Judge with clear eyes —not prejudice of Ages—
Whether villain's role was mine to play;
Or if, perhaps, I strove for higher purpose:
The healing of a land torn between gods.
My tale begins at midwinter's sacred night
—When visions showed the Future's troubled face,
And when duty called me from Avalon's mists
To Camelot's bright, yet shadow-haunted halls.

The chamber darkens, leaving only the glowing pool illuminated. The PRIESTESSES bow their heads, as if in prayer or meditation.

MORGAN LE FEY:
What follows is not tale of good and evil,
But of human souls caught in Fate's tangled web
—A Tale of brother, sister, son: a family torn
By forces larger than themselves alone.
Remember as you witness what unfolds:
The greatest tragedies are born of love;
Of noble aims that Fate turns back upon themselves;
Of truths revealed too late to change their course.
This is my story. Arthur's sister speaks.
Let those with ears to hear now listen well.

The light from the pool expands to fill the stage, then fades to darkness as the PROLOGUE ends.

ACT I

SCENE I

Time: the past. Avalon. A sacred grove. Midwinter night.

Enter MORGANA, clad in ceremonial robes, VIVIANE, and several PRIESTESSES performing ritual movements around a fire.

VIVIANE:
The Sacred Night draws on; and, with it, comes
The hour of Vision and of Prophecy.
Prepare thyself, Morgana, priestess born
Of royal blood, to see what must be seen.

MORGANA:
My heart stands ready, though my flesh may quail
At what the gods shall deign to show this night.
Six moons have passed since Uther's crown was laid
In earth; and, still, my brother tarries long
In coming to his birthright and his throne.

VIVIANE:
'Tis Merlin's doing; mark me well, my child.
The sorcerer bides his time and shapes the boy
To suit *h i s* purpose —not the land's true need.
Thy brother, Arthur, knows not half his blood:
The ancient power that through thy mother flows.
This night shall show what path the Future treads,
If thou wilt drink the sacred cup and see.

VIVIANE offers a chalice to MORGANA, who drinks.

MORGANA:
The mist of Time parts… I see a sword…
A throne… a table round… a golden crown…
And blood. So much blood upon the land.
My brother's hand shall bring both glory and…
(Suddenly convulsing)
No! The Old Ways fade! The sacred groves burn!
Merlin betrays the Balance of the World!

MORGANA falls to her knees, eyes wide with vision.

MORGANA:
I see my brother's glory and his shame;
I see a kingdom built on shifting sand;
The wound that never heals, the Cup unfound;
The promise broken and the land laid waste.
And I… I stand against him, yet for him:
To save what he, in blindness, would destroy.

VIVIANE:
The burden falls to thee, child of two worlds.
The old blood and the new must find their peace,
Or else in war shall Albion be drowned.

MORGANA:
Then I must go to Camelot forthwith,
To see my brother and this Merlin's schemes.
If Arthur truly is the promised king,
Then let him prove so by his deeds, not words.
And, if he falters, I shall be the hand
That guides the kingdom to its proper course.

VIVIANE:
Beware, Morgana. Visions show the end
—But not the winding path that leads thereto.
Thy brother loves thee not as thou lov'st him,
For he was raised apart and knows thee not.

MORGANA:
Blood calls to blood: he is my mother's son.

VIVIANE:
And Uther's get, who scorned the Ancient Ways.
Remember this: what Merlin builds is new,
And has no place for women such as thee,
Who bear the power of the Sacred Isle.

Thunder rumbles distantly.

MORGANA:
Then let him fear me, if he cannot love.

I go to Camelot with dawn's first light,
To see what King my brother seeks to be.

Exeunt.

SCENE II

Camelot. The Great Hall. Day.

Enter ARTHUR, crowned but young, with MERLIN, LANCELOT, GAWAIN, and other KNIGHTS.

ARTHUR:
These charts you've drawn, good Merlin, please explain
How they shall shape the kingdom I would build.
This circle here —what means this "Table Round"?

MERLIN:
A new design, my liege, where every Knight
May sit as equal to his fellows there
—With you at head, yet part of one great whole.
No corners where a man might hide or scheme,
But open truth in fellowship displayed.

LANCELOT:
A noble thought: no precedence of birth,
But merit only shall decide a place.

GAWAIN:
Yet some are born to lead, while others serve.
'Tis nature's way since time immemorial.

MERLIN:
The Old gives way, Sir Gawain, to the New.
King Arthur brings a dawn to Albion
—Where justice reigns, not merely strength of arm.

Enter a SERVANT, bowing.

SERVANT:
My Lord, a Lady waits without the gate.

She names herself as Morgana, and claims
The right of blood to enter Camelot.

ARTHUR and MERLIN exchange glances.

ARTHUR:
My sister comes unlooked for, at this hour?
I scarce remember her, from childhood days.
Admit her, and prepare a chamber, fit
For one of royal birth and close in blood.

Exit SERVANT.

MERLIN:
(Aside to ARTHUR)
Beware, my king. Thy sister brings with her
The Old Religion and its wild beliefs.
She was not raised as thou, in Christian faith,
But in the misty isle where druids reign.

ARTHUR:
She is my blood, the daughter of my sire.
I'll not refuse her rightful place at Court.

MERLIN:
Then grant her welcome, but with watchful eye.
The Old Ways and the New oft clash and spark
—And, in such conflagration, kingdoms burn.

Enter MORGANA, dressed in finery that marks her as both royal and priestess. The Knights murmur at her appearance.

ARTHUR:
(Rising from his throne)
Sister, thou'rt welcome to thy brother's Court.
Too long have blood ties languished between us.

MORGANA:
(Curtseying but maintaining proud eye contact)
My royal brother, grown so tall and fair!
When last I saw thee, thou wert but a child,
Newborn and wailing in our mother's arms.

ARTHUR:
(Surprised)
You saw me then? I thought…

MERLIN:
(Interrupting)
The Lady speaks
Of matters long ago and best forgot.
Your Majesty, the Council must proceed.

MORGANA:
(To MERLIN, with an edge)
The famous Merlin, who has shaped a king
From humble fostering to high estate.
I've heard much of thy wisdom… and thy craft.

MERLIN:
As I of yours, my Lady. Avalon's arts
Are known —though practiced not in Camelot.

MORGANA:
Yet Magic flows in all thy works, I think:
The sword, the crown, the kingdom thou hast shaped,
All bear the mark of powers you claim to shun.

ARTHUR:
Enough... My sister journeys far, and must
Be weary from the road. Sir Kay, attend,
And show the Lady to her chambers now.

SIR KAY bows, and gestures for MORGANA to follow.

MORGANA:
(To ARTHUR)
I thank thee, brother. But I come not just
For kinship's sake but for the kingdom's weal.
When we have rested, we must speak of things
That touch upon thy reign and future crown.

ARTHUR:
All in good time. Now, rest and be restored.

MORGANA exits with SIR KAY.

MERLIN:
She brings disturbance, like a storm-cloud dark.
The priestesses of Avalon yet hold
To Ancient Ways that Christ's clean light dispels.

ARTHUR:
She is my sister, Merlin. Half my blood.
Would you then have me reject her unheard?

MERLIN:
I'd have you guard your nascent kingdom well.
The Old Beliefs and New cannot both reign.
One must give way, as night before the day.

ARTHUR:
Then let her see the virtue of our cause:
The justice and the glory we shall build.
If her heart's true, she will embrace our Way.

GAWAIN:
And if she won't?

ARTHUR looks troubled, but does not answer.

MERLIN:
Then, choices hard must fall on harder hearts.
The kingdom stands above all ties of blood.

Exeunt

SCENE III

Morgana's chambers in Camelot. Night.

MORGANA stands at a window, looking out at the stars. A small altar with candles has been set up in one corner of the room. Enter NIMUE, secretly.

MORGANA:
I thought you might find passage to my quarters.

The Lady of the Lake walks shadowed paths,
Even in here: in Merlin's proud domain.

NIMUE:
The water flows where it desires, my friend;
And I flow with it, seen or all unseen.
What find you in this stone-built citadel?

MORGANA:
A brother grown to manhood, fair of face
—With Uther's pride, but not his cruelty.
Yet, Merlin holds him like a falcon jessed,
And whispers poison 'gainst the Ancient Ways.

NIMUE:
The sorcerer fears what he cannot control.
He builds a kingdom based on sword and cross,
With no place for the Goddess or Her gifts.

MORGANA:
Arthur might understand, if truth were told.
He knows not of his heritage or birth:
The magic that brought Uther to our mother's bed,
The price of blood that paid for his conceiving.

NIMUE:
Take care. Such tales, told wrongly, breed but hate.
Reveal too much, too soon, and lose all hope
Of swaying him from Merlin's narrow path.

MORGANA:
Then what? Stand idle, while the Groves are felled?
While priestesses are driven to dark caves?
While all our ancient wisdom turns to dust?

NIMUE:
Patience, Morgana. Time unveils all truths.
The sword that Merlin gave your brother holds
A doom within its gleaming, deadly edge:
The scabbard bears more power than the blade
—Yet this the King knows not, nor doth suspect.

MORGANA:
Then I shall win his trust, and show him true
The heritage that Merlin hides away.
My brother need not be our Ways' destroyer,
If he but sees the balance that must hold.

NIMUE:
Beware: the visions showed a darker path!

MORGANA:
Visions show what may be, not must be so.
I'll not condemn my brother ere he fails.

A knock at the door. NIMUE steps back into shadows.

SERVANT:
(From outside)
Lady, the King requests your presence at the feast.

MORGANA:
Tell him I shall attend directly.

SERVANT's footsteps recede.

MORGANA:
(To NIMUE)
Go now. I shall seek you by the lake, at moon's full height.
There's more to learn, before my course is set.

NIMUE:
Remember: Merlin watches with more eyes than two.
Trust not the walls to keep thy secrets close.

Exit NIMUE, through a hidden passage. MORGANA touches her altar briefly, then exits through the main door.

SCENE IV

The great hall of Camelot. A feast in progress. ARTHUR, GUINEVERE, KNIGHTS, and nobles seated at tables. MERLIN stands near ARTHUR. MORGANA enters and all eyes turn to her.

ARTHUR:
(Rising)
My Lords, my Knights, my Queen —I bid you welcome
My sister Morgana, daughter of Pendragon,
Too long a stranger to her father's halls.

Polite applause, as MORGANA takes her place at the high table near ARTHUR and GUINEVERE.

GUINEVERE:
(To MORGANA, quietly)
We've heard such tales of Avalon's fair isle,
Where women rule and men but rarely tread.
Is it as beautiful as legends say?

MORGANA:
More so, my Queen. The mists part, but for those
With eyes to see beyond the Veil of Things.
Perhaps, one day, you journey there yourself.

MERLIN:
(Sharply)
The Queen has duties here in Camelot
—Not least, to bear an heir for Albion's throne.

MORGANA:
(With sweet venom)
Of course. Yet queens have traveled since the dawn
Of Time. Unless this new-made Court of yours
Keeps women bound more strictly than the old?

ARTHUR:
(Intervening)
Nay, sister. Guinevere is free to go
Where duty and desire both permit.
But tell us of yourself —why come you now
To Camelot, when you might reign in Avalon?

MORGANA:
I come to know my brother, now a king.
To see this realm you build with Merlin's aid,
And offer what support a sister may.

GAWAIN:
(Boldly)
They say in Avalon the women practice arts
Forbidden by the Holy Church's Law.
That spells and incantations flow like wine,
And men are but the playthings of your will.

Uncomfortable silence falls.

MORGANA:
They say much, Sir Knight, by hearth and hall,
Of things they little understand or know.
In Avalon, we keep the Sacred Flame
That burned ere Rome was built or Christ was born.
We heal the sick, interpret dreams, preserve
The Knowledge that your Christian monks erase.
If this be sin, then sinful let me stand
—But judge not what thy mind has not embraced.

LANCELOT:
Well spoken, Lady. Courage and plain speech
Deserve respect, whatever faith one holds.

ARTHUR:
Indeed. Let us not speak of Difference,
But celebrate what binds us —blood and hope
For Albion's prosperity and peace.
(Raising his cup)
To family reunited under Heaven's grace!

All drink. MERLIN watches MORGANA intently.

MERLIN:
(Aside)
She speaks with honeyed words but hides her sting.
The Ancient Powers shall not subvert our work,
Nor shall the sister turn the brother's heart
From paths of light to shadow's seductive ways.

As the feast continues, MORGANA notices a young squire watching her from across the room —this is MORDRED, though she does not yet know him.

GUINEVERE:
(To MORGANA)
You watch young Mordred with a curious eye.

MORGANA:
(Startled)
Mordred? I know him not, yet something in
His bearing seems familiar to my sight.

GUINEVERE:
A ward of Orkney's Lord, sent here to train.
Some whisper he has royal blood, though none
Know surely whence it flows or who begot him.

MORGANA stares at MORDRED with growing intensity, then suddenly gasps and grips the table.

ARTHUR:
Sister, what ails thee? Art thou unwell?

MORGANA:
(Recovering)
'Tis nothing, but the weariness of travel.
Forgive me, brother, if I seek my rest.
Tomorrow we shall speak more of thy kingdom.

ARTHUR:
Of course. Sir Kay shall see you safely there.

As MORGANA rises, she and MERLIN lock eyes across the table, in silent challenge.

MERLIN:
(Aside)
She knows something of Mordred, or suspects.
The threads of Fate draw tight around us all.

Exeunt MORGANA with SIR KAY. The feast continues with music.

ARTHUR:
(To MERLIN)
My sister seems both wise and willful, friend.
What counsel would you give regarding her?

MERLIN:
Keep her close, but not too near thy heart.
The priestesses of Avalon serve powers
That stand against the kingdom we would build.
She may seek knowledge of thy plans; or, worse,
To turn thy Knights from loyalty's straight path.

ARTHUR:
You counsel mistrust of my own blood?

MERLIN:
I counsel caution, Lord; for, kingship bears
A burden heavier than blood or birth.
Thy vision for this land must stand supreme,
Above all else, even family's sweet call.

ARTHUR looks troubled, but nods slowly.

ARTHUR:
I'll heed thy wisdom, as I've always done.
But she shall have fair hearing and respect
—For she is Uther's daughter, as I his son.

Exeunt.

ACT II

SCENE I

The shores of a lake near Camelot. Predawn. MORGANA stands in the mist, NIMUE rises from the water.

NIMUE:
You‘ve seen him, then —the boy.

MORGANA:
Aye, Mordred. A face like Arthur’s, yet with something
Of my own within it. How can this be?

NIMUE:
Cast your mind back to the Beltane fires,
Six and ten years past: your brother, crowned,
Came seeking blessing from the Ancient Powers.
Remember not the feast, but after, when
The masked revelers danced beneath the moon.

MORGANA:
(Shocked realization)
The sacred marriage rite… I played the goddess…
The king, masked and anointed, came to me…
(With horror)
O, Gods above! It was my brother's flesh?
I knew not! The Rite demands anonymity!

NIMUE:
Merlin knew. He planned it thus, to bind
The bloodlines and the magic deeper still.
A child born of brother and of sister,
Of Priestess and of King —a vessel strong
To hold the power he would later wield.

MORGANA:
Then Mordred is… my son? And Arthur’s too?
This cannot be! Such knowledge would destroy him
—Him and the kingdom he so proudly builds.

NIMUE:
Now you see how deep the sorcerer's schemes.
He'd use the very power he pretends to shun:
The old blood magic, darkest of all arts,
To forge a weapon 'gainst the Ancient Ways.

MORGANA:
But why would Merlin risk such sacrilege?
What purpose could such dark begetting serve?

NIMUE:
The visions showed a kingdom split by sword,
A son who kills his father, takes his throne.
Perhaps he seeks to hasten such an end,
Or shape it to some purpose we see not.

MORGANA:
I must protect my child —and yes, my brother.
Neither knows the truth, nor must they learn it.
The boy believes himself of distant kin,
And Arthur thinks him but another ward.

NIMUE:
Truth has a way of finding light, Morgana.
Prepare yourself for when that day shall come.

MORGANA:
Then I must win my brother's trust completely,
Before such revelations shake his faith.
I'll show him how the Old Ways strengthen New;
How ancient wisdom guides the modern throne.

Dawn begins to break across the lake.

NIMUE:
Take care. The revelations in your visions
—The wound that never heals, the Cup unfound—
These signs mark Arthur's fate already sealed.
You may not change what has been set in motion,
But only guide its course to gentler shores.

MORGANA:
I'll not accept that doom as written firm.
My brother has a good heart, though misled.
If he but knew the truth of his own birth
—The magic that surrounds his very throne—,
He might embrace the Balance, not the sword.

NIMUE:
Then seek the scabbard of Excalibur,
Which holds more power than the blade itself.
Merlin keeps this knowledge from the king
—For, in that sheath lies healing, not mere death.

NIMUE begins to sink back into the lake.

MORGANA:
Wait! Tell me more of this scabbard's power!

NIMUE:
Seek answers in the patterns of the Stars,
In Water's flow and Stone's enduring strength.
The Time approaches when a choice must fall
On thee, Morgana —love or destiny.
Choose wisely, for all Albion hangs in wait.

NIMUE disappears beneath the waters. MORGANA stands alone, as the mists begin to clear with dawn's light.

MORGANA:
(Soliloquy)
How tangled grow the threads of Fate around us!
My brother builds a kingdom doomed to fall;
My son exists unknown to sire or self;
And I, caught between worlds of Old and New,
Must find a path where neither burns the other.
If Arthur knew the truth of sword and scabbard,
Of blood and magic mingling in his veins,
Would he then see beyond wise Merlin's words?
Or would such knowledge break his spirit clean?
I cannot risk it yet —too much, too soon,
Would turn his heart against me and our cause.
First, let me prove the value of Old Ways;

Show how the Ancient Wisdom strengthens rule;
Then, when his trust is gained, reveal by slow
Degrees the fuller truth of who we are.
Mordred, my son —forgive a mother's silence.
The time for truth shall come, but is not now.

Exit MORGANA, as the sun rises fully.

SCENE II

ARTHUR's private council chamber. ARTHUR, MERLIN, and several KNIGHTS (including LANCELOT and GAWAIN) discussing plans around a table.

Enter MORGANA, escorted by SIR KAY.

SIR KAY:
My Lord, the Lady Morgana seeks audience.

ARTHUR:
Admit her. We discuss the northern borders,
Where Saxon bands make trouble for our peace.

MORGANA approaches the table.

MORGANA:
I come not to intrude, but to assist.
The lands you speak of, I know well their Ways.
The people of the north keep ancient faith
—And might respond more kindly to thy rule,
If old traditions won thy respect too.

MERLIN:
(Coldly)
The King brings progress to this fractured isle,
Not superstition's chains to bind it back.

MORGANA:
Is it Progress, sorcerer, to burn
The Wisdom hard-won through a thousand years?
To call all Knowledge not of Rome "profane"?

The northern tribes have healing lore, that saves
More lives than Roman physic ever could.

GAWAIN:
She speaks some truth. My mother's people hold
To Older Ways, yet live in honor still.
Perhaps there's middle ground that might be found?

ARTHUR:
What would you counsel, sister, in plain terms?

MORGANA:
Send not just soldiers north, but scholars too.
Let them learn the wisdom of those tribes;
Record their lore, before it fades away.
Show respect for what they hold as sacred,
Even as you bring them to your law.

LANCELOT:
A wise approach. Conquest without consent
Breeds hatred that a hundred years won't heal.

MERLIN:
And if these tribes practice bloody rites?
Sacrifice to gods of wood and stone?
Would you have Arthur sanction such as this?

MORGANA:
You know full well such practices are rare
—And where they happen, born of desperation.
Show them prosperity needs no blood price,
And they will gladly set such things aside.

ARTHUR:
(Thoughtfully)
There's merit in your words. Sir Gawain, you
Shall lead this mission north with scholars chosen
From among our wisest monks and scribes.
Report what customs might be kept with honor,
And which must yield to more enlightened Ways.

MERLIN:
(Displeased)
My Lord, I counsel against this path.
The Church will not look kindly on such… tolerance.

ARTHUR:
The Church serves God, as do I in my way.
But I am King of all within this realm,
Not only those who bow to Roman rites.
My Justice must extend to every soul,
Else it is merely conquest badly dressed.

MORGANA smiles slightly, having won this small victory.

MERLIN:
(To MORGANA)
Well played, my Lady. But the game is long.

MORGANA:
No game, Lord Merlin, but the kingdom's weal.
Unless you see your counsel as supreme
—Above all others', who might love the king?

ARTHUR:
Enough. I value both your wisdoms high.
'Tis no dishonor to consider Paths
Beyond those first envisioned or proclaimed.
Gawain, prepare to journey with first light.
Morgana, I would hear more of your thoughts
On how the Old and New might peaceful dwell.

MERLIN stands, clearly displeased.

MERLIN:
I take my leave to contemplate these… changes.
May wisdom guide your steps, my king.

Exit MERLIN.

GAWAIN:
He takes it ill, when others sway your mind.

ARTHUR:
Merlin has been my guide since boyhood days.
His wisdom shaped the man who stands before you.
Yet even he may not see every path,
Or understand all peoples' hearts and minds.

MORGANA:
Wise words, my brother. A true King listens
To many voices before choosing his course.

ARTHUR:
My sister, stay. The rest of you, prepare
For Gawain's northern journey as discussed.

Exeunt all but ARTHUR and MORGANA.

ARTHUR:
Speak freely now, away from watchful eyes.
Why came you truly to my Court, Morgana?
I sense purpose deeper than mere kinship.

MORGANA:
Directness suits you well. I'll match it true.
I came because the Balance tips too far.
The Old Ways fade like mist before the sun,
Yet carry wisdom needful for this land.
Merlin builds a kingdom based on sword,
When healing arts and ancient lore might serve
To bind the people faster to thy rule.

ARTHUR:
You speak of magic, which the Church condemns.

MORGANA:
I speak of knowledge, brother. Call it what you will.
The turning of the stars, the healing herbs,
The secrets of the earth and flowing waters
—These things were known when Rome was but a dream.
Would you cast aside such precious gifts,
Because men fearful of their power name them sin?

ARTHUR:
You challenge much I‘ve been taught to believe.

MORGANA:
I challenge not belief, but blind rejection.
Know this: the sword you bear was forged in magic;
The crown upon your head blessed by old Rites;
Your very birth…

She stops herself, having nearly revealed too much.

ARTHUR:
My birth? What of it?

MORGANA:
(Recovering)
Is heralded in prophecies of old.
But this is talk for other times, perhaps.
I ask but this: judge Wisdom by its fruits,
Not by the name men give its tender roots.

ARTHUR:
You speak with passion and intelligence.
I‘ll think upon your words with care, I swear.
But know that I must walk a narrow path,
With Church and Custom pressing close on either side.

MORGANA:
All I ask is space for Old and New to meet,
Not in conflict, but in a rich accord.
A King who rules with wisdom from all springs
Builds deeper fountains for his people’s thirst.

ARTHUR:
Stay in Camelot a season more.
Let me see these benefits you claim,
These Ancient Ways that might enrich my rule.
Show me, sister, don’t merely tell of them.

MORGANA:
(Bowing)

With gladness, brother. You shall not regret
This openness of mind and royal heart.

Exeunt.

SCENE III

The royal gardens. GUINEVERE walks alone, looking troubled. Enter LANCELOT.

LANCELOT:
(Bowing)
My Queen, forgive this chance encounter here.
I sought but solitude, to clear my thoughts.

GUINEVERE:
As did I, Sir Knight. The Court grows thick
With politics and whispers, since the coming
Of the Lady Morgana to our halls.

LANCELOT:
She brings a storm of Change within her wake.
The King seems moved by her impassioned pleas
For tolerance of older, stranger Ways.

GUINEVERE:
Arthur has always had a questing mind.
It draws him toward new thoughts, like moths to flame.
Yet Merlin frowns, and mutters dark forebodings,
While priests cross themselves when she walks by.
I know not what to think of this divide.

LANCELOT:
And you, my Queen? What does your heart counsel?

GUINEVERE:
(After a pause)
I find her presence… troubling, yet compelling.
She speaks of women's wisdom, ancient strength,
Of powers that Rome's harsh faith has sought to crush.

Something in me responds to such bold words,
Though I was raised in strict Devotion's paths.

LANCELOT:
The Old and New need not be enemies.
Truth wears many garments through the Ages;
Yet remains, at heart, unchanged and pure.

GUINEVERE:
Poetically said, Sir Lancelot.
(Moving closer)
I've noticed how you watch her at the Court:
With eyes that miss no movement, hear all words.
Do you find her dangerous? Or fair?

LANCELOT:
(Carefully)
I find her… consequential, nothing more.
My duty and my heart belong elsewhere.

Their eyes meet for a moment too long. Enter MORGANA, unseen at first.

MORGANA:
(Announcing herself)
Forgive my interruption, gracious Queen.
Sir Lancelot, your presence honors us.

LANCELOT and GUINEVERE step slightly apart, embarrassed.

GUINEVERE:
Lady Morgana, join us if you will.
We spoke of changes in the Court of late.

MORGANA:
Changes ever come, like seasons turning.
The wise adapt, the rigid break and fall.
(To LANCELOT)
I understand you champion the Round Table,
Where Knights sit equal, none above the rest?

LANCELOT:
It represents the kingdom Arthur builds:
Fair justice, equal honor, shared resolve.

MORGANA:
A noble vision. Yet I wonder this:
Will women sit at this grand table too?
Or does equality extend only to men?

LANCELOT looks uncomfortable.

GUINEVERE:
(With slight edge)
An interesting question. I myself
Have wondered why the counsel of the realm
Comes only from sword-bearers and from priests.
Are women's minds not equal to such tasks?

LANCELOT:
(Diplomatically)
The Round Table's shape makes room for all
Who earn their place through merit and through deed.
Perhaps in time, as Customs slowly change,
The circle might grow wider than first drawn.

MORGANA:
In Avalon, women rule by right of wisdom
—Not merely birth, or strength of sword-arm's skill.
The highest mysteries are kept by those
Whose bodies mirror Life's creative force.

GUINEVERE:
(With genuine interest)
Tell me more of Avalon and its ways.
We hear but whispers, often dark with fear.

MORGANA:
Fear born of ignorance, my Queen, no more.
In Avalon, we study Nature's laws,
The movement of the stars, the body's currents,
The subtle powers that flow through all that lives.

We heal the sick, ease birth-pangs, comfort death,
And keep alive the songs of Ancient Days.

GUINEVERE:
And magic? Do you work such arts as well?

MORGANA:
What men call “magic” is but knowledge deep
Of natural laws beyond their common ken.
The Church fears what it cannot understand;
And, cannot rule what lies outside its grasp.

LANCELOT appears uncomfortable with the direction of conversation.

LANCELOT:
The King has council waiting; I must go.
(Bowing to both women)
My Queen. My Lady.

Exit LANCELOT.

MORGANA:
(Watching him leave)
A noble Knight, but bound by chains unseen:
His heart wars with his vows in silent torment.

GUINEVERE:
(Startled)
What mean you by such words?

MORGANA:
Only that Duty’s path and heart’s Desire
Oft run as separate streams through mortal lives.
(Changing subject)
But speak, my Queen: you bear no child, as yet?
Three years of marriage, yet the cradle waits?

GUINEVERE:
(Stiffening)
That is a private grief, if grief it be.
Not all are blessed with fruitful wombs at will.

MORGANA:
Forgive me. I spoke not to cause you pain.
In Avalon, we know of herbs and rites
That might assist where nature proves reluctant.
If you should wish such knowledge, ask of me.

GUINEVERE:
(Hesitantly)
The priests would call such methods witchcraft dark!

MORGANA:
The priests know little of a woman's body,
Yet claim to rule all matters of its use.
Would you trust more their prayers or women's wisdom,
—Passed down through countless generations' care?

GUINEVERE:
You offer dangerous counsel, temptingly wrapped.
Yet I cannot deny it stirs my thoughts.
Perhaps… perhaps we might speak more of this,
In private chambers where walls have no ears.

MORGANA:
Whenever you wish, my Queen. My knowledge stands
At your disposal, freely given in faith.

Enter a MESSENGER, running.

MESSENGER:
My Queen! Lady Morgana! Urgent news:
A party from the north arrives in haste.
Sir Gawain returns with wounded men
And tales of ambush by a Saxon band!

GUINEVERE:
Ready the healers, and prepare the Hall.
I'll come at once, to oversee their care.

MORGANA:
I'll join you with remedies of my own.
Some wounds respond to arts the monks know not.

Exeunt, hurrying.

SCENE IV

The great hall, transformed to receive wounded. ARTHUR, MERLIN, KNIGHTS present. GUINEVERE directs servants. Enter MORGANA with herbal remedies.

GAWAIN lies wounded on a pallet, other injured KNIGHTS and SOLDIERS nearby.

ARTHUR:
How came this ambush, when we sought but peace?

GAWAIN:
(Weakly)
We journeyed as commanded, with scholars and scribes;
But, near the northern marches, fell upon
A Saxon war band, thirsting for our blood.
We fought as best we could, but they knew well
The terrain’s hidden paths and secret ways.

MERLIN:
(To ARTHUR)
This proves my counsel sound. The northern tribes
Cannot be trusted with your gentle hand.
And, force alone will bring them to their knees!

MORGANA:
(Moving to GAWAIN's side)
Let me examine him —before you plot
More bloodshed, based on half-heard truths alone.

MORGANA begins tending GAWAIN’s wounds, examining with expert hands.

MORGANA:
This wound —it bears the mark of poison cruel.
No Saxon blade leaves such a festering track.
This was designed to kill by slow degrees,
To maximize the suffering and pain.

MERLIN:
What know you of such things, unless your arts
Include the making of such foul concoctions?

MORGANA:
(Sharply)
I know because I know its antidote.
(To her attendant)
Bring me the blue vial from my chambers, quick!

The attendant rushes out.

ARTHUR:
Can you save him, sister?

MORGANA:
If the poison hasn't reached his heart.
Stand back and give me space to work my craft.

MERLIN steps forward, alarmed.

MERLIN:
My Lord, I counsel against such practices.
Let Christian prayers and physic do their work.

GAWAIN:
(Gasping in pain)
My Lord… the pain burns like the fires of Hell…
I feel Death's cold fingers on my brow…

ARTHUR:
(To MERLIN)
Would you have me choose Doctrine over Life?
My sister claims she can save a loyal Knight;
And I would have her try, with all her skill.

The attendant returns with the vial. MORGANA takes it.

MORGANA:
Hold him firm. This will cause brief agony,
Before the healing can begin its work.

Several KNIGHTS hold GAWAIN down, as MORGANA administers the remedy. GAWAIN screams, then falls unconscious.

KNIGHT:
You‘ve killed him with your witch’s brew!

MORGANA:
(Calmly)
He sleeps to heal. By morning’s light, the wound
Will show new flesh, pink as a newborn babe’s.
The fever will have broken, and his mind
Will clear of poison’s fog and deathly dreams.

MERLIN:
And if he dies instead? What then, my lady?

MORGANA:
Then judge my arts as harshly as you please.
But first, let dawn reveal what truth shall be.

ARTHUR:
(To all)
We‘ll wait till morning for our judgment here.
Tend the other wounded, as best you can.
(To MORGANA)
I trust your knowledge, sister, though it’s strange.
Save my Knight, and earn the Court’s full thanks.

MERLIN pulls ARTHUR aside.

MERLIN:
(Urgently, low)
This is how it starts —small steps toward darkness.
First healing arts that seem benign and good,
Then deeper magics that corrupt the soul.
She weaves a web around you, thread by thread.

ARTHUR:
Would you have me reject what saves a life?
What manner of King would choose Faith over Mercy?

MERLIN:
A King who sees beyond the Moment's Need,
To dangers lurking in Tomorrow's shadow.
The Old Religion harbors darker powers
Than healing herbs and stars' cold calculation.

ARTHUR:
Enough. I've made my choice in this. Till dawn,
We'll see what fruits her knowledge truly bears.

ARTHUR moves away. MERLIN remains, watching MORGANA work with narrowed eyes.

MERLIN:
(Soliloquy, quiet)
The patterns shift and change with her return.
The future I have glimpsed grows dim, uncertain.
Arthur's heart, once firmly in my guidance,
Now turns like needle to her magnet's pull.
If Gawain lives, her influence grows stronger.
If dies, suspicion falls but briefly, then fades.
I cannot act directly 'gainst her power
—Blood ties bind the King more than my words.
Some other way must open, to remove
This priestess from our carefully crafted path.
The boy, perhaps? Young Mordred watches her
With eyes that hunger for a mother's love.
There lies a weakness I might probe with care
—A vulnerability in her armored heart.
All for Albion's sake, not personal spite,
Though she accuses me of baser motives.
The kingdom must prevail, whatever the cost.
The Old Gods die, so new light might be born.

Exit MERLIN. MORGANA looks up, as if sensing his plotting, then returns to her healing work.

ACT III

SCENE I

Morning. The Great Hall. GAWAIN sits up on his pallet, color returned to his face. ARTHUR, GUINEVERE, KNIGHTS, and courtiers gather around in amazement.

GAWAIN:
‘Tis like a miracle —the pain is gone,
The wound half-healed that yesterday gaped wide.
Whatever draught the Lady gave me, worked
—Beyond all hope or reason to expect.

ARTHUR:
(To MORGANA)
This healing proves the worth of what you know.
I stand amazed and grateful, sister mine.

Enter MERLIN, who observes the scene with barely concealed displeasure.

MORGANA:
‘Tis but a simple remedy, long known
In Avalon, where such herb-lore is kept.
Had your monks not burned so many scrolls,
Such knowledge might be common, not rare art.

MERLIN:
A fortunate recovery, indeed.
Yet one success proves not a system sound.

KNIGHT:
My Lord, Sir Gawain stood at death’s dark threshold.
Now he sits and speaks with vigor new.
If this be not proof of wholesome art,
What evidence would satisfy your doubt?

MERLIN:
(Stiffly)
I merely counsel caution in our judgments.
One swallow makes not summer, wise men say.

ARTHUR:
Caution noted, but result stands plain.
My sister's skill has saved a valued Knight.
(To MORGANA)
I would have you share such healing arts
With those who tend our wounded and our sick.
If remedies exist unknown to us,
It serves the kingdom well to learn them now.

MORGANA:
Gladly, brother. Knowledge grows by sharing,
Not by jealous hoarding behind locked doors.
My skills are yours to use for people's good.

MERLIN steps forward.

MERLIN:
My Lord, a private word, if you permit.

ARTHUR:
(Sighing)
Very well. The rest of you, see to
Sir Gawain's comfort and the other wounded.

Exeunt all but ARTHUR and MERLIN.

MERLIN:
You tread a dangerous path, my King and student.
The Lady Morgana weaves enchantment subtle,
Not with spells alone, but skillful words.
She seeks to undermine all we have built;
To bring back shadow where we've kindled light.

ARTHUR:
She saved a life where your arts failed to serve.
Would you have me reject such useful knowledge,
Because it comes not wrapped in Christian prayer?

MERLIN:
I'd have you see beyond the moment's gift:
To poison hidden in the sweetened cup.
The old religion serves not God but chaos

—Wild powers untamed by Reason’s firm control.
Give ground to her, and soon you‘ll find your Court
Awash in pagan rite and forbidden arts.

ARTHUR:
You paint her blacker than her deeds deserve.
I see a woman skilled in Nature’s lore,
Who shares her knowledge freely for our good.
Where lies the harm in healing herbs and balms?

MERLIN:
The harm lies not in herbs but what comes next.
First healing; then divination; then control
Of minds and hearts through spells and incantations.
The slope is steep and slippery to the Fall.

ARTHUR:
You taught me to judge actions, not just fears.
Until she proves herself of ill intent,
I‘ll not condemn my sister for her skills.

MERLIN:
(With cold intensity)
Then I must work to save you from yourself,
And from the web she spins with patient craft.
Remember this: not all that heals brings health;
Not all that glitters in the mind is gold.

Exit MERLIN. ARTHUR looks troubled.

ARTHUR:
(Soliloquy)
Between these two, wisdom tears itself apart.
Each claims to serve my good with different means;
Each warns against the other’s hidden harm.
My sister’s blood speaks strong within my heart,
Yet Merlin raised me from my boyhood days.
Whose counsel should a King trust more than both?
The Old Ways or the New? The blood or bond?
A kingdom cannot stand on shifting sand,
Nor can a King rule well with mind divided.

I must find truth between these warring claims,
Or lose both wisdom in the clash of wills.

Exit ARTHUR.

SCENE II

MORGANA's chambers. MORGANA sits at her altar, deep in meditation. Enter MORDRED, hesitantly.

MORDRED:
Forgive my interruption, noble lady.
I knocked, but heard no answer to my call.

MORGANA opens her eyes, startled to see him.

MORGANA:
Young Mordred. Enter freely, have no fear.
I was but lost in thought and prayer combined.

MORDRED:
They say you healed Sir Gawain with strange arts;
That death itself retreated at your word.
Such power awes the Court, and frightens some.

MORGANA:
(Studying him intently)
And you? Do you come here in fear or awe?
Or something else that draws you to my door?

MORDRED:
(Hesitantly)
I know not what impels my steps this way.
Since first you came to Court, I've felt a pull
—As if some thread invisible connects
My heart to yours, across the crowded hall.
(With sudden emotion)
They tell me I was orphaned at my birth,
My mother dead, my father unrevealed.
Yet something in your eyes seems… familiar

—Like looking in a pool and seeing there
A face that might be mine in female form.

MORGANA is visibly affected, but controls herself.

MORGANA:
How old are you, young Mordred?

MORDRED:
Five and ten summers have I seen, my Lady.
I came to Camelot three seasons past,
Sent by Lord Orkney as a ward and squire.

MORGANA:
(Carefully)
And what know you of your birth and parentage?

MORDRED:
Little enough. Lord Orkney spoke of kinship
Distant to the crown, but would say no more.
I dream sometimes of faces without names,
Of voices calling me from misty shores.
(With intensity)
Do you know aught of me? Your eyes betray
Some recognition that you strive to hide.

MORGANA:
(After a pause)
We are all connected in this realm,
More closely than most know or would believe.
Blood ties web through noble houses old,
Creating bonds both seen and unsuspected.

MORDRED:
(Disappointed)
You speak in riddles, like the Court sorcerer.

MORGANA:
Some truths are not for hasty revelation.
Time unveils all mysteries in proper season.
But know this, Mordred —you are not unloved,
Nor abandoned to Fate's uncaring hand.

Eyes have watched your growth with tender care,
Though distance kept them from your daily sight.

MORDRED:
(With hope)
You know my parents then? They live?

MORGANA:
I cannot speak more plainly at this time.
But I can offer you instruction true
In arts both old and new, if you would learn.
Your mind shows brightness like a flame unhoused,
And hunger for the knowledge others fear.

MORDRED:
I would learn all you deign to teach, my lady.
The monks find me too questioning by half,
And Merlin speaks in cryptic half-truths only.
You alone seem willing to address
The wonderings that plague my restless mind.

MORGANA:
Then come to me when duties grant you leave.
We‘ll speak of stars and stones, of herbs and lore,
Of history unwritten in the scrolls.

A knock at the door interrupts them.

SERVANT:
(From outside)
Lady Morgana, the Queen requests your presence.

MORGANA:
Tell her I shall attend her presently.
(To MORDRED)
We‘ll speak again, young seeker. Keep your heart
Open to truth, wherever it may dwell.

MORDRED:
(Bowing)
I thank you for your kindness, Lady Morgana.
Until our next meeting, I remain your student.

Exit MORDRED. MORGANA touches her heart, overcome with emotion.

MORGANA:
(Soliloquy)
My son, my blood, so near yet still unknown!
How my heart yearns to claim thee openly,
To speak the truth of thy great parentage.
Yet such revelation now would shatter all
—Thy peace of mind, thy father's tenuous throne,
The fragile trust I've built within these walls.
What mother chooses silence over claim?
One who sees beyond the moment's joy
To consequences dire for all concerned.
Patience, heart. The time approaches fast
When truth must out, for good or greater ill.
Till then, I'll guide him as a mentor might,
And nurture what of me lives on in him.

Exit MORGANA.

SCENE III

GUINEVER"s private chambers. GUINEVERE waits anxiously. Enter MORGANA.

MORGANA:
You summoned me, my Queen?

GUINEVERE:
(Nervously)
I did. Please close the door and sit with me.
I would speak of matters private and… delicate.

MORGANA closes the door and sits.

MORGANA:
Your countenance speaks worry. How may I serve?

GUINEVERE:
You spoke before of… women's arts and knowledge.

Of remedies for those whose wombs stay empty,
Despite the prayers and hopes of years long passed.

MORGANA:
Ah. You seek a child to secure the throne.

GUINEVERE:
(With sudden emotion)
I seek a child because my heart cries out!
Each month that passes without quickening, brings
Fresh grief and deeper doubt of my own worth.
Arthur speaks no blame; yet in his eyes
I see the question growing like a shadow:
What Queen am I who bears no prince or princess?
What wife, whose body fails its sovereign duty?

MORGANA:
(Gently)
The fault may not be yours alone to bear.
It takes two souls to forge a third between.

GUINEVERE:
(Shocked)
You would suggest the king…

MORGANA:
I suggest nothing, merely state what's known
To women wise in Nature's deepest arts.
Sometimes the seed lacks strength, sometimes the soil.
Often both require aid to join in fruit.

GUINEVERE:
Can you… would you help us in this need?

MORGANA:
I can prepare remedies for you both,
And teach you of the Moon's most fertile tides.
But first, a question plain I needs must ask:
Is your heart fixed solely on the king?

GUINEVERE stiffens.

GUINEVERE:
What mean you by such strange words?

MORGANA:
Only that divided hearts make barren ground.
I‘ve seen how Lancelot watches from afar,
And how your eyes find his across the hall.

GUINEVERE:
(Rising in anger)
You dare suggest…

MORGANA:
I dare suggest that truth precedes all healing.
I judge not where your heart may truly dwell,
But remedies work best when spirit’s clear.
If torn between two loves, your womb may close
Like flower fearful of the coming storm.

GUINEVERE:
(Sitting again, deflated)
I am a Queen before I am a woman.
Duty binds me to my husband’s side,
Whatever dreams may haunt my private thoughts.

MORGANA:
Then let us work with what is, not what might be.
I‘ll make a potion both of you should take
When Moon hangs new-born in the western sky.
And teach you days when Nature favors life,
When seeds may root most deeply in the earth.

GUINEVERE:
The Church would name such knowledge witchcraft dark.

MORGANA:
The Church names “witchcraft” all it does not rule.
Would you trust more in foreign prayers and threats,
Or wisdom women have preserved through Ages?
The choice is yours, as woman and as Queen.

GUINEVERE:
(After a pause)
Prepare your remedies. I'll speak to Arthur.
But this remains between us three alone.
Should Merlin or the priests gain wind of this…

MORGANA:
My lips are sealed, as tightly as my herbs.
This woman's mystery stays among us women.

A loud commotion is heard from outside.

GUINEVERE:
What disturbance breaks the evening's peace?

Enter a LADY-IN-WAITING, alarmed.

LADY:
My Queen! Riders from the west bring news:
The Saxons march in force toward Camelot!
King Arthur calls his Council urgently.

GUINEVERE:
(Rising)
We'll speak more of our matter when time permits.
Now, duty calls us both to larger stage.

Exeunt all, hurrying.

SCENE IV

The council chamber. ARTHUR, MERLIN, KNIGHTS (including LANCELOT), and war commanders gathered around maps. Enter GUINEVERE and MORGANA.

ARTHUR:
The situation stands thus: Saxon forces
Cross our borders with unprecedented strength.
Their chieftain, Aelle, claims our eastern lands,
And burns all villages that stand his way.

LANCELOT:
How many fighters does he lead against us?

COMMANDER:
Reports suggest five thousand swords at least,
With more joining daily to his cause.

GAWAIN:
We can field three thousand Knights and men,
If we strip defenses from the north.

MERLIN:
A dangerous gambit, but Necessity
May force our hand in this dark hour of Need.

MORGANA:
Before you commit to battle's bloody course,
Consider this: the Saxon tribes respond
To different methods than mere force of arms.
They respect the Old Ways, ancient powers.
A demonstration of such might give pause
To even their most battle-hungry hearts.

MERLIN:
(Scornfully)
Would you have us dance and chant to frighten them?
Cast chicken bones to turn their swords aside?
We face hard men who understand but steel,
Not superstitious rites or mystical displays.

MORGANA:
You underestimate both them and me.
The Saxon tribes fear powers beyond the World
—More than they fear a kingdom's mortal arms.
Show them the gods of Old support your Throne,
And half your battle's won before blood flows.

ARTHUR:
What specifically do you propose, sister?

MORGANA:
Let me ride with small guard to their camp.

I‘ll demonstrate the powers that sleep within
This land they seek to claim as conquering Lords.
If they persist thereafter, then your swords
May finish what my arts cannot dissuade.

LANCELOT:
This seems a worthy stratagem, my king.
If it should fail, we lose but little time.
If it succeeds, we save much blood and grief.

MERLIN:
(To ARTHUR)
She seeks to showcase powers best left hidden;
To reassert the old gods’ fading claims.
This serves her purpose, not the kingdom’s need.

ARTHUR:
(After consideration)
I‘ll not dismiss what might avert a slaughter.
Morgana shall attempt her peaceful arts,
While we prepare for war should they prove vain.
Sir Lancelot, you‘ll lead the guard that goes
To keep my sister safe on this strange mission.

MERLIN:
My Lord…

ARTHUR:
(Firmly)
My decision stands, Lord Merlin.
We‘ll use all tools that Providence provides,
Not just the ones Tradition recommends.
(To all)
Make ready. We move at dawn’s first light.
If Peace fails, let our swords speak Camelot’s might.

Exeunt all but MERLIN and MORDRED, who has been watching silently from the shadows.

MERLIN:
(Not noticing MORDRED)
So it begins —the turning of the Wheel,
The pattern shifting as new threads intrude.

She gains in influence with every crisis,
While ancient prophecies move toward their mark.
The boy, the sword, the wound that never heals
—All dance together toward appointed doom.

MORDRED:
(Stepping forward)
You speak of destiny and doom, sorcerer.
Do such fates concern me and my place?

MERLIN is startled, then composes himself.

MERLIN:
Young Mordred. How silent you stand in shadow.
What brings you to Councils meant for men?

MORDRED:
I seek to learn the arts of governance,
As one who serves the King in humble ways.
But answer me —what boy, what wound speak you of?
What prophecies turn like wheels within your mind?

MERLIN:
(Studying MORDRED intently)
You spend much time with Lady Morgana late.
Has she filled your ears with ancient tales?
Spoken of your birth or parentage?

MORDRED:
She speaks in riddles, much as you do now.
But something in her eyes, when she beholds me,
Suggests she knows more than she dares reveal.
Do you hold such knowledge too, Lord Merlin?

MERLIN:
Knowledge is a blade with two sharp edges.
What heals in one hour may wound in next.
I counsel patience, while the kingdom stands
Balanced between Old Powers and the New.

MORDRED:
(With sudden intensity)

I tire of cryptic words and half-told truths!
My whole life hangs suspended in the dark,
Like fruit forbidden knowledge would make ripe.
If you know my origins, speak plain now,
Or I shall seek answers through other means.

MERLIN:
(After a calculating pause)
Not yet, young Mordred. The time approaches fast
When truth shall fall, like thunder from clear sky.
But that hour is not this hour before us.
For now, watch closely how these events unfold.
Much will be revealed in coming days
That changes how you see both King and kingdom.

MORDRED:
You play with me, like cat with wounded mouse.

MERLIN:
I guide you toward a destiny profound.
Choose carefully whose counsel shapes your mind:
The priestess who beguiles with ancient lore,
Or one who seeks to build a kingdom new
—Where merit, not mere blood, determines worth.

Exit MERLIN. MORDRED remains, troubled.

MORDRED:
(Soliloquy)
Between these powerful forces I stand small
—A pawn that both would move for their own ends.
Yet pawns grow strong when reaching distant squares,
And pieces greater fall by subtle play.
Whatever blood flows hidden in my veins,
Whatever fate the stars have writ for me,
I‘ll not be merely moved by others’ hands.
Lady Morgana holds keys to my past;
Merlin guards doors to futures yet unborn.
Between them, I must forge my separate path,
And find what Destiny truly marks me mine.

Exit MORDRED.

ACT IV

SCENE I

The Saxon encampment. Night. Campfires burn, as SAXON WARRIORS prepare for battle. Enter AELLE, their chieftain, with lieutenants.

From the darkness approach torches. Enter MORGANA, LANCELOT, and a small guard.

SAXON LIEUTENANT:
Riders approach, bearing the dragon banner!
But few in number —not a fighting force.

AELLE:
Envoys, perhaps, to beg for gentler terms?
Let them approach. We'll hear what cowards speak,
Before we take their lands by rightful strength.

MORGANA and LANCELOT are brought forward.

AELLE:
Who comes to Aelle's camp, in darkest night?
Speak now your purpose, or forfeit your lives.

LANCELOT:
I am Sir Lancelot of Camelot's Court.
This Lady is the Lady Morgana, sister
To King Arthur, whose lands you trespass on.
We come to offer terms before blood flows.

AELLE:
(Laughing)
Terms? Your King sends women to make terms?
Has Camelot fallen so low in warrior spirit?
What terms could stay my sword from rightful conquest?

MORGANA:
(Stepping forward)
Not terms of gold or land, bold Aelle.
I come to show what powers protect this realm,
What ancient forces guard its sacred soil

—Against all those who seek to claim, by force,
What must be won through reverence instead.

AELLE:
(Amused but intrigued)
The woman speaks of magic and old gods.
We Saxons know such powers, fear them well
—But doubt that pampered Courts of Camelot
Remember arts our grandmothers respected.

MORGANA:
Then witness what your grandmothers would know.

MORGANA raises her arms. The campfires suddenly flare high, then dim to embers. A wind rises from nowhere.

MORGANA:
(Chanting in an ancient tongue)
By earth and air, by water and by fire,
By powers that slept ere Rome was ever built,
I call upon the Guardians of this isle!

Thunder rolls across the sky, though no clouds are visible. The ground trembles slightly.

SAXON WARRIOR:
(Fearfully)
Hægtesse! She works the old deep magic!

MORGANA takes a handful of powder from a pouch, and casts it into the nearest fire, which erupts in blue-green flames. Images seem to form in the smoke —warriors falling, ravens feeding.

MORGANA:
See in the flames the future I foretell:
Your warriors fallen, your banners torn and bloodied,
Your dreams of conquest scattered like dead leaves.
This land rejects you, Aelle. Its very soil
Would turn to poison, beneath your armored feet.
Its waters would run foul at your approach;
Its very air would choke within your lungs.

The Saxon warriors murmur fearfully, some making signs against evil.

AELLE:
(Shaken but defiant)
Parlor tricks and smoke, to frighten children!
I‘ve seen such displays in market squares.

MORGANA:
Then see this, chieftain proud and unbelieving.

She draws a dagger, cuts her palm, and lets blood drip onto the earth. Where it falls, small flames spring up, forming a circle around her.

MORGANA:
Blood of the old blood speaks to this ancient soil.
I am daughter of its deepest powers,
Priestess of the isle where wisdom dwells.
Behold what comes to those who scorn my warning!

She gestures toward the largest fire. The flames form into shapes of dragons that seem to writhe and snap. A terrible howling comes from the woods beyond the camp. Many Saxon warriors fall to their knees.

SAXON LIEUTENANT:
(Terrified)
The hounds of the Underworld! She calls them forth!
Great Aelle, this is no common witch-craft!

AELLE:
(Visibly disturbed)
What terms does your King offer, sorceress?

MORGANA:
Retreat beyond our borders by tomorrow’s dawn.
Return the spoils you’ve taken from our lands.
Swear binding oaths to respect the boundaries set,
And Arthur will not pursue your fleeing ranks.
Refuse, and what I’ve shown will seem but gentle
Compared to wrath that follows my departure.

LANCELOT watches, equally impressed and disturbed by MORGANA’s display.

AELLE:
(After a long pause)

We will… consider your king's generous terms.
Give us until midnight to send reply.

MORGANA:
Until midnight, then. But know this well:
The powers I've woken watch, with sleepless eyes.
They hunger for the blood of those who trespass.
Choose wisely, son of Saxon, while choose you may.

With a gesture from MORGANA, all fires return to normal. She and LANCELOT withdraw with their escort.

SCENE II

A clearing in the forest, away from the Saxon camp. MORGANA and LANCELOT rest, while their guards keep watch.

LANCELOT:
Was that… real sorcery I witnessed there?
Or clever trickery to fool the eye?

MORGANA:
(Smiling mysteriously)
What seems more comforting to your Christian soul?
Does it matter, if the result's the same?

LANCELOT:
Truth always matters, especially to Knights
Who pledge their lives to Honor's stern demands.
I'd know if we deceived or truly showed
The powers that guard the realm we both serve.

MORGANA:
Both, perhaps. The powders and the lights
Are ancient knowledge any might acquire.
But they work only because deeper truths
Give substance to the shadows they invoke.
This land has power, Lancelot. It flows
Like hidden rivers through its sacred heart.

Those who know its paths may draw upon
Such strength to heal or harm, protect or ruin.

LANCELOT:
And you? What path do you walk with such arts?

MORGANA:
I seek to save what Merlin would destroy
—The balance between Old Ways and the New.
Arthur could unite them in his reign:
Create a kingdom where all Wisdom thrives,
Not just the narrow path that Rome dictates.
The sword he wields was forged in magic fire;
The crown he wears blessed by ancient Rites.
Yet he's taught to scorn the very powers
That raised him to the throne he proudly holds.

LANCELOT:
You speak of powers. I think of people's lives:
Ordinary souls who till the land,
Who seek not magic but security
—Not ancient gods, but peace to raise their young.

MORGANA:
And you think these aims stand separate, opposed?
The Old Ways kept the seasons in their course,
Ensured the crops would grow, the rain would fall,
Children would be born, the sick find healing.
Without such knowledge, what is your vaunted peace
But hollow shell where hunger soon takes root?

LANCELOT:
(Thoughtfully)
I never considered thus… Merlin speaks
Only of the darkness in Old Faiths.

MORGANA:
Merlin fears what he cannot control.
He builds a kingdom based on his design,
With Arthur as its face but not its heart.
Tell me, noble Knight —have you not seen
How he shapes all counsel toward his ends?

How voices contrary find sudden silence?
How even your beloved Queen grows pale
When Merlin's shadow darkens courtly doors?

LANCELOT looks startled at the reference to GUINEVERE.

LANCELOT:
You speak too freely of matters not your own.

MORGANA:
All matters of the realm are rightly mine,
As daughter of its soil and royal line.
I see how your heart wars with sworn duty;
How Love and Honor clash like sword on shield.
Such conflicts tear the kingdom, at its seams,
While Merlin stitches patches to conceal.

LANCELOT:
(Rising in agitation)
I must check the perimeter's defense.

LANCELOT walks away. MORGANA smiles sadly.

MORGANA:
(Soliloquy)
So noble, yet so blind to what's to come.
Their love shall be the spark that lights the pyre,
Where Arthur's dreams of unity shall burn
Not by my hand —I'd save them if I could;
But Merlin's rigid vision leaves no room
For human hearts to follow natural course.
The sorcerer builds on sacrifice of Joy,
On Duty bound with chains of cold Devotion.
Such kingdoms crack when Passion's earthquake strikes
—As strike it must, when hearts are long denied.

A MESSENGER approaches from the direction of the Saxon camp.

MESSENGER:
Lady Morgana, the Saxon chief has fled!
His forces break camp and march away with haste,

Abandoning positions strongly held.
Your magic worked more thoroughly than sword!

MORGANA:
(Rising)
Then let us bring this news to Camelot's king:
A battle won without a drop of blood
Should please a ruler wise in ways of peace.

Exeunt all.

SCENE III

The great hall of Camelot. ARTHUR holds court with GUINEVERE, MERLIN, and KNIGHTS. Enter MORGANA and LANCELOT.

ARTHUR:
(Rising)
What news from the Saxon front?

LANCELOT:
Victory, my king! The enemy retreats
Beyond our borders, with uncommon speed.

ARTHUR:
How came this miracle without a battle?

LANCELOT:
(Glancing at MORGANA)
The Lady Morgana… demonstrated powers
That convinced the Saxon chief to reconsider.
Their forces left before the midnight hour,
Taking nothing but what they arrived with.

KNIGHT:
A bloodless victory? By what means achieved?

MERLIN:
(Darkly)
By means best left unspoken in this Hall.

MORGANA:
Why hide what saved our people needless death?
I showed the Saxons that this land itself
Rejects their claim and would resist their rule.
The Old Powers still protect this realm, my Lord,
Though some would have you scorn their sacred aid.

ARTHUR:
However won, this victory brings joy.
Our people need not mourn their sons and fathers;
Our fields remain untrampled by War's foot.
For this, dear sister, you have earned our thanks.

MERLIN steps forward.

MERLIN:
My Lord, while thanks are due for danger passed,
We must consider costs beyond the moment.
The Lady Morgana's arts, though effective now,
May breed more fear than love among our allies.
Word will spread of witchcraft in the Court,
Of pagan Rites performed with royal sanction.
The Church will not stand silent at such news.

MORGANA:
The Church would rather see our people slaughtered
Than saved by wisdom older than its books?
What God of love would make such cold demand?

ARTHUR:
(Troubled)
There's merit in both views presented here.
We rejoice in victory without bloodshed,
Yet must consider how our methods read
To those whose support we cannot afford to lose.

GAWAIN:
My Lord —as one who owes his life to skills
The Lady Morgana brought from Avalon's shores—,
I say we'd be ungrateful fools to spurn
The ancient knowledge that preserves our realm.

Let Rome think what it will —we stand on British soil,
Which knew its gods long ere the Christ was born.

Murmurs of both agreement and dissent among the Knights.

MERLIN:
Would you return to human sacrifice?
To divination by entrails freshly spilled?
To worship of the oak and sacred grove,
While civilization's light dims and fades?

MORGANA:
You twist the Old Ways into grotesque shapes!
We honored Life, not Death; Growth, not Decay.
The sacrifices were of grain and wine,
Of poetry and music, dance and art.
Yes, blood sometimes sealed most solemn pacts
—But freely given, not torn from unwilling flesh.

GUINEVERE:
(Unexpectedly speaking)
Perhaps there's wisdom in both paths described.
The Christian faith brings mercy, charity;
While Older Ways kept knowledge of our land
—Its herbs, its seasons, waters, soils, and stones.
Must we choose between these separate goods?
Or might they both find place in Arthur's realm?

Surprised looks from all sides at the Queen's intervention.

ARTHUR:
(Thoughtfully)
My Queen speaks wisely, seeing beyond the quarrel
To possible accord where both might thrive.
I'll not condemn what saved my people's blood,
Nor will I scorn the faith that lights our path.
Let tolerance be the watchword of our Court,
Until experience proves which course serves best.

MERLIN:
(Bowing stiffly)
As Your Majesty commands, though I maintain

My reservations about this dangerous course.
Some powers, once woken, resist return to sleep;
And appetites, once fed, demand more food.

MERLIN exits. The Court watches his departure with mixed emotions.

ARTHUR:
Let us celebrate this bloodless triumph now.
Prepare a feast, to honor those whose wisdom
Spared our realm the ravages of war.

The Court disperses, leaving ARTHUR, MORGANA, and GUINEVERE.

ARTHUR:
(To MORGANA)
Though I support your actions publicly,
I must know more of these powers you command.
Are they as Merlin warns —hungry forces
That, once unleashed, might threaten what we build?

MORGANA:
All power holds potential for both good and ill,
Whether wielded by sword or spell or prayer.
The danger lies not in the power itself,
But in the heart and purpose of its user.
I seek to heal the rift in Britain's soul,
Where Old and New tear at each other's throat.
Your vision of a unified, just realm
Cannot succeed if half its Wisdom's spurned.

GUINEVERE:
(To ARTHUR)
I've seen her healing arts restore Sir Gawain,
When Christian prayers and physic failed to serve.
There's value in this knowledge, husband mine,
That shortsighted fear would have us waste.

ARTHUR:
I stand between two counsels, both with merit:
Merlin raised me, shaped my understanding,
Yet blood speaks strong in favor of my sister.
I'll watch this path unfold with careful eye,

Ready to change course should dangers rise.
(*To MORGANA*)
For now, your victory earns you greater voice
In matters of the realm and royal choice.

Exit ARTHUR and GUINEVERE. MORDRED emerges from the shadows, where he has been listening.

MORDRED:
The King speaks fair, but doubt still clouds his mind.
Merlin's influence runs deep as mountain roots.

MORGANA:
(Startled)
Mordred! How silent you move through shadow.
What brings you to eavesdrop on royal speech?

MORDRED:
Knowledge is power, or so you yourself have taught.
I seek to understand the forces swirling
Around this throne I serve with humble hand.

MORGANA:
(Studying him)
There's nothing humble in your heart, young man.
Ambition burns in you like banked fire,
Waiting for the wind to fan its flames.

MORDRED:
(With sudden intensity)
I dreamt last night of you upon a shore,
Holding infant child within your arms.
Behind you, stood a King with golden crown;
His face in shadow, yet somehow known to me.
The child was me, I knew with dreamer's certainty.
What means this vision that disturbs my sleep?

MORGANA is visibly shaken.

MORGANA:
Dreams are windows to both past and future,

But often show distorted views of both.
Trust not in single vision's narrow glimpse.

MORDRED:
You evade the question, Lady Morgana.
As does Merlin when I press for truth.
Between you both, my origin remains
A mystery, wrapped in diplomatic lies.
I am no common orphan —this I know.
The blood that flows within my veins is royal;
Though none will speak its lineage plain to me.

MORGANA:
The time approaches when all shall be revealed.
But rushing truth before its season, harms
More than it heals the wounds of ignorance.
Trust me in this, if nothing else you trust.

MORDRED:
How long must I wait in Shadow's edge,
While others bask in light of known descent?
Arthur had Merlin to guide his path to throne;
Who guides mine through this fog of mystery?

MORGANA:
I will, if you'll accept my hand in this.
Come to Avalon when summer wanes.
There, beside the lake where secrets rest,
I'll speak what must be spoken, show what's hidden.
Until then, learn patience and discretion;
For, knowledge sought too rashly turns to poison.

MORDRED:
(After consideration)
I'll wait until the summer's end, no longer.
But know this, Lady —I will have my truth,
From your lips or from whatever source provides.
My patience stretches thin, as winter ice.

Exit MORDRED.

MORGANA:
(Soliloquy)
The son begins to sense his hidden power,
While forces gather toward inevitable storm.
Arthur gains in trust, but Merlin schemes;
The Queen's heart strays, while Duty holds her fast;
And I, who came to heal a kingdom's wounds,
May yet become the blade that deepens them.
The visions showed a broken throne, a field
Where father faced son in mortal combat.
Can such fate be turned aside by Wisdom?
Or does Destiny laugh at our small struggles,
As ocean mocks the pebbles on the shore?
I must secure the scabbard Merlin hides:
The healing sheath more powerful than the sword.
With it, perhaps, the future might be changed
—The wound prevented, ere it can be dealt.

Exit MORGANA.

SCENE IV

MERLIN's chambers. Books, scrolls, and strange instruments fill the room. MERLIN works at a table, consulting ancient texts. Enter NIMUE, unseen by him at first.

MERLIN:
(Muttering to himself)
The pattern changes faster than foreseen.
The priestess gains in favor day by day,
While Arthur's heart divides between our counsels.
The Saxon threat provided perfect stage
For her to demonstrate those Ancient Powers
I've worked so long to banish from this land.
Now, Knights who once feared magic speak its praise;
And, even Guinevere lends voice to folly.

NIMUE:
(Stepping from shadows)
How quick you are to name as "folly" views
That challenge your monopoly on truth.

MERLIN spins around, startled.

MERLIN:
The Lady of the Lake walks bold, in chambers
Where she was never invited nor is welcome.

NIMUE:
Yet here I stand, despite your wards and spells.
Water flows where it wills, wise sorcerer,
Finding path through stone and earth and air.

MERLIN:
State your purpose, and be gone from here!
I have no patience for Avalon's games tonight.

NIMUE:
I come to mark what even you must see:
That path you tread leads straight to Ruin's edge.
The Balance shifts; the Powers, long suppressed,
Rise like floodwaters 'gainst a crumbling dam.
Arthur stands at crossroads clearly marked,
Yet you still push him toward the barren way.

MERLIN:
Barren? I build a kingdom based on Law,
On Reason's light, on Justice blind to birth
—While you and yours would drag us back to Night,
Where superstition ruled and blood determined worth.

NIMUE:
You speak of progress, while you plot regression.
The Table Round —your greatest innovation—
Mirrors ancient circles where all stood equal,
Where King was first among peers, not tyrant crowned.
The code of chivalry you praise so highly
Echoes older codes from times you scorn.
You steal our Wisdom, dress it in new clothes,
Then claim yourself inventor of the fashion!

MERLIN:
(Angrily)
I forge a future cleansed of bloody Rites;

Of sacrificial fires and moon-mad priestesses;
Of kings who rule by birth alone, unchecked
By any law save appetite and whim!

NIMUE:
You forge a future doomed before it dawns.
The scabbard that you hide holds greater power
Than sword you placed in Arthur's untried hand.
Without its healing grace, the wound that comes
Will never close; and Albion will bleed,
Until the land itself drowns in despair.

MERLIN:
So Morgana seeks the scabbard now?
I might have known she'd aim for its possession.

NIMUE:
The scabbard belongs with those who understand
Its purpose and its power —to heal, not harm.
Its magic flows from Sources you pretend
To scorn —while secretly you draw upon them.
Hypocrite! You use the Old Ways' strength,
While publicly condemning those who honor them.

MERLIN:
I use what tools Necessity provides,
To build a realm where such tools won't be needed.
The irony escapes you, blinded as you are
By worship of a past best left entombed.

NIMUE:
The past lives on in every breath we draw,
In every stone that forms your precious realm.
Deny the Roots, the Tree will surely wither.
Arthur senses this, though you conceal it.
His heart responds to truths his sister brings,
To echoes of a wisdom born in blood.

MERLIN:
(With sudden coldness)
Blood indeed. Does Mordred know his yet?
The truth of his conception and his birth?

The sacred marriage rite that was profaned
When brother lay with sister, all unknowing?

NIMUE:
(Sharply)
You arranged that sacrilege! You guided
Arthur to the Ritual, masked and uninformed.
You knew Morgana played the goddess role,
Yet spoke no word to stop what then occurred.

MERLIN:
I merely let events take natural course.
The child born of that union fulfills
A Prophecy as old as British soil:
The king's bane, wound-giver, throne-breaker.
In Mordred's veins flows blood both pure and tainted:
A power that will rise against its source.

NIMUE:
And you let this happen, knowing full well
The tragedy that must unfold from it?

MERLIN:
Sometimes a realm must fall before it rises.
Arthur's dream is but a first attempt;
A rough draft of the kingdom yet to come.
From Camelot's ashes, phoenix-like, will rise
A greater Britain, purged of ancient shadow.

NIMUE:
(With horror)
You sacrifice a King you claim to love,
A kingdom you pretend to serve with faith,
For some imagined future built on ruins?
What manner of loyalty is this perversion?
What Wisdom sees Destruction as its tool?

MERLIN:
The highest Wisdom looks beyond the moment,
Beyond a single life or reign or realm:
To centuries where Reason conquers Fear,
Where man stands free of superstition's chains.

Arthur's role is greater than he knows:
A stepping stone toward that illumined age.

NIMUE:
I leave you to your cold, mechanistic dreams.
But know this, sorcerer: the powers you scorn
Yet hold dominion over Fate's design.
The Triple Goddess watches, measures, waits.
Your calculations miss the living heart
That beats beneath the surface of all things.
That heart will not be silenced by your schemes,
Nor will its rhythms bend to your control.

NIMUE begins to fade back into shadow.

MERLIN:
Tell Morgana this —the scabbard stays
Where I have hidden it, beyond her reach.
Let Arthur stand or fall by sword alone,
As men must do in this more reasoned age.

NIMUE:
(Almost gone)
Then on your head falls all that follows now.
The blood, the betrayal, the kingdom's shattering fall.
History will judge your wisdom harshly, Merlin,
When truth cuts through the legends you would build.

NIMUE disappears. MERLIN turns back to his work, but his hands tremble slightly.

MERLIN:
(Soliloquy)
She thinks to shake my purpose with her words,
To plant the seeds of Doubt in Reason's soil.
But I have seen too far, planned too long,
To falter at the threshold of fulfillment.
Let Morgana seek the scabbard vainly;
Let Mordred feel the stirring of his blood;
Let Arthur waver between opposing counsels.
The pattern is set, the threads already woven.
What comes now is tragedy ordained:
Necessary suffering that brings forth New Age.

I am not cruel —merely clear of vision,
Seeing past the Present's small concerns
To Future's vast, unfolding possibility.
If I must be villain in this present tale,
Let History judge me by the world I birth,
Not by the painful labor of its making.

Exit MERLIN.

ACT V

SCENE I

Morgana's chambers, night. MORGANA performs a Ritual at her altar. Candles flicker, as she chants softly. Enter GUINEVERE, hesitantly.

MORGANA:
(Without turning)
Enter, Guinevere. I felt your approach.

GUINEVERE:
How did you know 'twas I outside your door?

MORGANA:
Your presence has a signature, like all things.
After months within these walls, I've learned
To read such signs as clearly as written words.
(Rising and turning)
But come —what brings the Queen to seek me now,
When midnight's hour keeps most souls abed?

GUINEVERE:
I bear both thanks and warning close entwined.
The remedy you gave has borne sweet fruit
—I carry Arthur's child beneath my heart.

MORGANA smiles with genuine pleasure.

MORGANA:
This news brings joy! A child for Camelot;
An heir to carry forward Arthur's dream.

GUINEVERE:
(With shadow crossing her face)
If dream it still remains when child arrives.
Dark clouds gather around our golden Court.
Merlin works in secret, day and night,
While Knights divide in whispered loyalty.
Some rally to your wisdom, others cling
To older counsel, fearing Change's face.

And Arthur —torn between these pulling forces—
Grows short of temper, distant in his speech.

MORGANA:
And Lancelot? How fares the noblest Knight?

GUINEVERE looks away quickly.

GUINEVERE:
He serves the King with all his strength and heart.
(Changing subject)
But I come with warning, not just news.
Merlin spoke to Arthur privately today.
I know not what was said, but Arthur's face
Grew dark as storm clouds over distant hills.
He looked at me with questions in his eyes,
Then turned away before I could inquire.
I fear the sorcerer poisoned him against you,
Perhaps spoke lies about your purposes.

MORGANA:
More likely truth than lies disturbs his mind.
There are revelations I've withheld from Arthur,
Truths about our family, his birth, his crown.
Merlin may have chosen now to twist
These facts, to serve his own determined ends.

GUINEVERE:
What truths could shake a King so visibly?

MORGANA:
(After consideration)
You carry royal heir. You have the right
To know what blood flows in your unborn child.
Arthur was conceived through Merlin's magic,
When Uther took my mother through deception,
Wearing another's face by sorcerer's art.
The throne he sits upon was gained by blood:
By forces Merlin publicly condemns,
While privately employing for his aims.
The sword that makes him King was forged in magic;
Its scabbard holds the greater power by far:

To heal all wounds, prevent all mortal harm.
Yet Merlin hides this scabbard, lets the king
Bear naked blade without protective sheath.

GUINEVERE:
(Shocked)
These cannot be the only revelations
That darken Arthur's brow like thunder clouds!

MORGANA:
(Gravely)
There's more, but that I cannot speak aloud
—Even to you, until necessity compels.
Trust that I seek to heal, not harm the realm
—To guide my brother toward his highest self,
Not tear him down from heights so dearly won.

GUINEVERE:
I believe you, though your methods oft disquiet
My simpler faith and understanding limited.
But know this —Arthur plans to summon you
At dawn for reckoning long delayed.
Prepare yourself for questions sharp as swords;
For, doubt now clouds the trust so lately grown.

MORGANA:
I thank you for this warning, gracious Queen.
Some battles cannot be avoided —only met
With Truth as shield and Wisdom's steady sword.
I'll face my brother with an open heart,
Though consequences may prove hard to bear.

GUINEVERE:
(Moving to leave)
One thing more —young Mordred watches all,
With eyes that miss no movement, catalog
Each word and gesture in his careful mind.
He seems… changed since your arrival here:
More intent, more questioning, more bold.
Some whisper he resembles Arthur's youth,
Though darker in his moods and quicker to anger.

MORGANA:
Mordred carries burdens yet unrevealed.
His path and Arthur's cross in ways that may
Bring either glory or grief to Camelot's story.
Watch him, but with kindness in your gaze.
He needs compassion more than most suspect.

GUINEVERE:
I'll heed your counsel. Now, I must return
Before my absence notes attention unwanted.
(Touching her abdomen)
The child stirs already, though but newly quickened.
A strong spirit dwells within, it seems.

MORGANA:
May that strength serve Camelot in days to come.
The realm will need all steadfast hearts it finds.

Exit GUINEVERE. MORGANA returns to her altar.

MORGANA:
(Soliloquy)
So Merlin forces Revelation's hour,
Plays his hand before I've gathered strength.
The chessboard tilts toward Endgame's swift approach,
With pieces moving to their final squares.
Tomorrow I must face my brother's doubt,
Perhaps his anger, even his rejection.
Yet truth long hidden festers like a wound
—Only lanced, can healing finally begin.
If Arthur truly is the King of Prophecy,
He'll weather Truth's sharp storm and stand more firm.
If not… then Camelot was built on sand
—A shining dream too fragile for our world.
Mordred too must know his parentage,
Before he learns it twisted from another's lips.
This night may be my last in Camelot's halls.
I must prepare for exile or for triumph,
For reconciliation or for war.
The Goddess guide my words when dawn arrives.

She extinguishes her candles one by one, leaving the stage in darkness.

SCENE II

Arthur's private Council Chamber, dawn. ARTHUR, GAWAIN, LANCELOT, and several other KNIGHTS wait. Enter MERLIN.

ARTHUR:
Is all prepared as I commanded, Merlin?

MERLIN:
Yes, my king. The test you seek stands ready.
When faced with sacred objects of the Faith,
Those who practice darker arts recoil.
Their powers wane in Christianity's pure light.

ARTHUR:
I seek not entrapment but confirmation.
If my sister walks a path aligned with Heaven,
She'll welcome such protections, not resist.
If shadows taint her arts, better we know
ere more damage spreads throughout the Court.

GAWAIN:
(Troubled)
My Lord, this seems unworthy of your justice.
The Lady Morgana saved my life with skill
That Christian healers could not hope to match.
She turned back Saxon hordes without bloodshed,
Sparing countless lives on both sides of conflict.
Are these the actions of a malevolent force?

MERLIN:
Evil often wears a pleasing mask, Sir Knight.
The greatest dangers come with sweetest smile,
Performing minor goods to win deep trust
Before revealing darkness long concealed.

LANCELOT:
(Carefully)
I have seen her powers with my own eyes.
Impressive, yes, but aimed toward kingdom's weal.
What specific charges now demand such test?

ARTHUR and MERLIN exchange glances.

ARTHUR:
Matters have come to light concerning Mordred,
And other truths long hidden from our view.
I would hear my sister's own accounting,
Before passing judgment on these revelations.

Enter a SERVANT.

SERVANT:
The Lady Morgana awaits your pleasure, sire.

ARTHUR:
Admit her. Leave us then —this matter stays
Between the highest counsel of the realm.

Exit SERVANT. Enter MORGANA, regal and composed.

MORGANA:
(Bowing slightly)
Brother, you summoned me at early hour.
I come as bidden, though the manner of it
Suggests some urgency beyond routine.

ARTHUR:
(Coldly)
Indeed. Matters of grave import demand
Clear answers only you can now provide.

MORGANA:
Ask freely. I have nothing to conceal.

MERLIN:
(Stepping forward)
Before this inquiry proceeds, a simple test
To clear all doubt about the powers you wield.

MERLIN gestures, and KNIGHTS bring forth a small chest. He opens it to reveal a crucifix, holy water, and other Christian relics.

MERLIN:
These blessed objects cause no harm to those

Whose magic flows from Heaven's sanctioned source.
But those who draw on darker wells of power
Will find them painful, weakening, revealing.
Would you consent to hold these sacred items?

MORGANA:
(With dignified anger)
Is this what Camelot's justice has become?
Trials by superstition, tests designed
To confirm prejudice, not discover truth?
(To ARTHUR)
Brother, I had thought your wisdom greater.

ARTHUR:
Answer Merlin's challenge, sister. Prove
Your arts derive from sources pure and good.

MORGANA:
I'll not demean myself with such crude tests.
The Old Religion predates your Christian faith
By thousands of years on this sacred isle.
Its power flows from earth and sky and sea,
Not from demons or from darkness bred.
Would you test the sunrise or the tides
By holding cross against their ancient rhythms?

MERLIN:
Her refusal speaks more truth than words.

MORGANA:
I refuse because the test itself is flawed
—Based on ignorance and fear, not understanding.
The powers I wield built Stonehenge, tracked the stars,
Healed the sick when Rome was but a village.
They raised the very stones of Camelot's walls,
Forged the sword you bear with such false pride.

ARTHUR:
(Sharply)
What mean you, "false pride"?

MORGANA:
You bear Excalibur as symbol of your right to rule,
Yet know not half its power or true purpose.
Merlin keeps you ignorant by design,
Hiding the scabbard that gives greater gift
—The power to heal all wounds, prevent all harm.
Without it, you wield Death but not Life's strength;
Destruction without Restoration's balance.

ARTHUR looks to MERLIN, who remains impassive.

ARTHUR:
Is this true? The scabbard holds such power?

MERLIN:
(Carefully)
The scabbard possesses certain… properties.
I kept it separate for the kingdom's safety,
Lest too much magic concentrate in one hand.

MORGANA:
(Laughing bitterly)
Safety? You feared Arthur might grow immune
To your manipulations if he held both!
Tell him, sorcerer, of his very conception
—How Uther took Igraine through your deceit,
Wearing her dead husband's stolen face!
Tell him how the throne he proudly holds
Was gained through bloody magic you pretend to scorn!

ARTHUR is visibly shaken.

ARTHUR:
These accusations —are they true, Lord Merlin?

MERLIN:
(Reluctantly)
Some necessary actions in affairs of state
May seem unsavory when stripped of context.
Uther loved Igraine; the realm required an heir.
I merely facilitated what needed to happen.

MORGANA:
"Facilitated"? You enabled rape through sorcery!
Our mother went to her grave never healing
From the violation sanctified as royal marriage!

ARTHUR:
(Stunned)
I never knew… she never spoke of this…

MORGANA:
How could she? Trapped as royal consort,
Separated from her surviving daughters,
Watched always by your precious counselor here.
(Pointing at MERLIN)
He ensured she never told you truth of your begetting,
Never revealed the price that bought your crown.

The KNIGHTS look uncomfortable. LANCELOT steps forward.

LANCELOT:
My Lord, these matters of the past, while grave,
Cannot alone determine present justice.
The Lady Morgana has served Camelot well,
Since coming to your Court these many months.

MERLIN:
(Coldly)
Has she? Ask then of Mordred's parentage.
Let her speak plainly of the boy's true blood.

Sudden silence falls across the chamber.

ARTHUR:
What of Mordred? What connection lies
Between my sister and this youthful ward?

MORGANA:
(After a long pause)
This truth I would have shared in gentler time,
When hearts were ready and all minds prepared.
Mordred is my son, born of sacred Rite,
When the goddess joined with god in flesh.

ARTHUR:
(Not comprehending)
You bore a child? And sent him to Orkney,
Rather than raise him in Avalon's safety?

MORGANA:
(With growing emotion)
The Rite of Beltane, six and ten years past.
You came newly crowned to seek the blessing
Of powers older than your Christian God.
The sacred marriage joined the land to king
—Priestess and Monarch, Goddess and Lord.
But Merlin kept one truth concealed from both:
The King who came to me wore mask and cloak,
His identity hidden as the Ritual demands.
That King was you, my brother. Mordred is your son.

Shock ripples through the chamber. ARTHUR staggers back.

ARTHUR:
Impossible! This cannot be! I never…

MERLIN:
(Grimly)
You remember not, because I ensured it so.
The Ritual required symbolic union only,
But ancient powers took control that night,
Creating what Prophecy long foretold
—The child who would bring Camelot's fall.

ARTHUR:
(*With growing horror*)
By all that's holy… What abomination
Has been wrought through our unwitting flesh?
Brother and sister joined in sacred Rite,
Yet profaned by Deception's poisoned touch!
(*With genuine anguish*)
This shame falls not on Mordred, nephew-son,
But on those who orchestrated such blasphemy.
My mind reels with this revelation's weight;
The very ground beneath my throne now quakes.

GAWAIN:
(Horrified, to Merlin)
You knew this would occur? And let it happen?

MERLIN:
I serve not just this King or present realm,
But future ages yet unborn, unnamed.
Some tragedies must play their destined course,
For greater good to ultimately flourish.

ARTHUR:
(With growing rage)
You used us both as puppets in your schemes?
Let brother lie with sister, all unknowing?
Created child conceived in innocence yet sin?
What manner of advisor plots such horror?

MORGANA:
Now you see the truth I came to share.
Merlin builds your kingdom on deception;
On manipulation masked as wise counsel;
On suppression of the very powers
That might heal the wounds his plans create.
Mordred is innocent of his conception's circumstance.
The fault lies not in him but in the Web
That Merlin wove around us all, from birth.

MERLIN:
(Desperately)
My Lord, she twists the truth to poison you
Against the progress we have labored to achieve!
Yes, harsh means sometimes serve enlightened ends.
The kingdom you have built stands beacon bright
Against the darkness of Superstition's night!
Would you undo all this for sentiment?
For family ties that bind you to the past?

ARTHUR:
(With cold fury)
You speak of light, while dwelling deep in shadow.
Of progress built on suffering concealed.

What kingdom can endure on such foundation?
What justice flow from source so deeply tainted?

ARTHUR turns to MORGANA.

ARTHUR:
Sister… I cannot grasp all implications
Of what's revealed this bitter, breaking dawn.
But know this —Merlin's counsel loses favor,
While your truth, though painful, earns respect.

Enter MORDRED suddenly, pale with shock.

MORDRED:
Is it true? Am I son of King and Priestess?
Born of brother's seed in sister's womb?

Silence falls. All turn to look at him.

ARTHUR:
Mordred… you should not be here…

MORDRED:
I followed whispers to their venomous source.
Heard servants speak of tests and accusations,
Of revelations that would shake the realm.
Little did I know they spoke of me:
My blood, my birth, my very existence.
(To MORGANA and ARTHUR)
Am I monster bred from sacred sin?
Abomination prophesied to bring destruction?
Or merely pawn in cosmic game of chess,
Moved by hands unseen to squares predetermined?

MORGANA:
(Moving toward him)
Thou art my son, whom I have loved from birth,
Though Fate required our separation hard.
Not monster but a child of ancient power,
Born when god and goddess joined in flesh.
What Prophecy makes of you, remains unclaimed
—Your choices still are yours, your future unwritten.

MORDRED:
(Backing away)
Yet written it seems in every fearful glance;
In Merlin’s schemes and Arthur's horror plain.
I, who sought belonging all my life,
Find myself more alien than before.
Royal blood twice over flows in me;
Yet taints me, rather than confirms my place.

ARTHUR:
(Gathering himself)
Mordred… nephew… son… whatever name
Best acknowledges our tangled bonds of blood.
The circumstance of birth condemns no man,
In kingdom built on merit more than heritage.
I need time to understand these revelations,
But place no blame on you for others’ actions.

MORDRED:
(With bitter laugh)
How generous the King to his pollution!
How magnanimous to bastard doubly cursed!
I need no time to see with perfect clarity:
I am the kingdom’s shame, made flesh and bone.

MORDRED turns and leaves abruptly. MORGANA moves to follow.

ARTHUR:
(To MORGANA)
Let him go. Some wounds need solitude,
Before another’s touch can offer healing.
We all must think on what’s been spoken here.
Merlin, you will yield the scabbard now,
And answer fully for deceptions past.
Sister, though Truth’s storm breaks violently,
I thank you for the courage of its speaking.

MERLIN:
My Lord, I beg you reconsider…

ARTHUR:
(Cutting him off)

Enough! Your counsel rings hollow as tomb.
The trust between us lies in ruins now,
And cannot be rebuilt on same foundation.
Go! Bring the scabbard to this chamber straight.
Your future role in Court remains undecided.

MERLIN bows stiffly and exits. The KNIGHTS look to ARTHUR for guidance.

ARTHUR:
Leave us. What remains must pass between
Sister and brother, Priestess and King alone.

Exeunt all but ARTHUR and MORGANA.

ARTHUR:
(After a pained silence)
Did you know? When you came to Camelot,
Did you know Mordred's parentage from start?

MORGANA:
I knew. The goddess sent me visions clear,
When first I saw him in your Court that night.
I came to heal the rifts in Britain's soul,
To bridge the chasm between Old Ways and New.
But also came to know my son in person,
To guard him from the fate that Merlin planned.

ARTHUR:
Why not tell me sooner? Why let months pass by?

MORGANA:
Would you have believed me, with no proof?
Against the trusted counsel of your youth?
I needed time to show my worth and truth,
To demonstrate the value of Old Knowledge,
Before revealing secrets dark as blood.

ARTHUR:
(Sitting heavily)
Everything I thought I knew dissolves.
My very birth, my crown, my sacred charge:
All founded upon sorcery and deceit.

The Round Table built by blood-stained hands.
What King am I, if built on such foundation?

MORGANA:
(Kneeling beside him)
A King who now can choose with open eyes.
The past cannot be changed, but future waits
—Unwritten still, responsive to your will.
Take the scabbard, reunite with sword.
Embrace both sides of power —Death and Life,
Justice and Mercy, Old Ways and the New.
Camelot need not fall if Wisdom rises.

ARTHUR:
And Mordred? What of him and Prophecy?

MORGANA:
Prophecy shows possible, not certain paths.
Treat him as your blood, not as your doom.
The boy hungers for acceptance, place,
For father's love denied by circumstance.
Give him all these, and destiny might turn
From tragedy foretold to triumph unexpected.

ARTHUR:
(Rising with new resolve)
So be it then. When Merlin brings the scabbard,
I'll reunite what should have never parted.
We'll speak to Mordred together, as his parents,
Though circumstances of that truth bring pain.
The Round Table shall make room for Old and New:
For Christian Faith and pagan Wisdom joined.
Perhaps from this day's dark revelation
A stronger, truer Camelot might rise.

A commotion is heard outside. Enter SIR KAY, urgently.

SIR KAY:
My Lord! Merlin has fled the castle walls!
He took the scabbard and important scrolls,
Leaving word he goes to "save what can be saved".
And, worse —young Mordred gathers Knights who share

His sudden rage against the Court's deception.
The Lords who long have chafed at Round Table's rule
—Where noble birth yields place to common merit—
Now rally to his side, with ready swords.
The Houses most devout in Christian faith
Join with those who scorn your tolerant rule.
They arm themselves, and speak of rights denied
—Of truth concealed and heritage dishonored.
Already near a quarter of your Knights
Have pledged their arms to Mordred's bold revolt;
And peasants, too, drawn by his royal blood
Mixed with ancient powers of your sister born.

ARTHUR:
(With dawning horror)
So quickly Hope dissolves to ash and dust.
(To MORGANA)
Come! We must find Mordred before blood spills.
Whatever wounds we bear must not spread further,
To innocent subjects caught in royal storm.

Exeunt all, hurrying.

SCENE III

The shores of a lake near Camelot. MERLIN stands with scrolls and a wrapped object (the scabbard). Enter NIMUE from the water.

NIMUE:
So the mighty Merlin flees like thief,
Stealing what was never rightly his.

MERLIN:
I safeguard what must survive this falling Court.
Camelot teeters on Destruction's edge,
As I foresaw, as Prophecy demanded.
Yet, from its ashes, something new will rise
—A kingdom built on reason, not on blood.

NIMUE:
Your reason has the stench of fear upon it.
Your vision narrows like a miser's heart.

You claim to build the Future, yet destroy
The very souls whose strength might forge it true.

MERLIN:
Mock if you will. Yet History shall judge
Between your fading ways and my far sight.
I go to plant the seeds of kingdoms future
—Where Arthur's dream, refined and purified,
Might flourish free from Superstition's chains.

NIMUE:
And the scabbard? What claim have you to that?

MERLIN:
Better lost than used to thwart Fate's course.
The goddess you serve has had her Day.
New powers rise that brook no competition.

NIMUE laughs, a sound like water over stones.

NIMUE:
Poor, blind Merlin. For all your vaunted wisdom,
You understand so little of true power.
The goddess never dies, only transforms.
The Old Religion sleeps perhaps, but dreams
—And, in its dreaming, shapes what's yet to come.
Your "Reason" is but moment's passing fashion;
The mysteries endure through Time's long march.

NIMUE gestures. The waters of the lake begin to rise.

MERLIN:
(Backing away)
What treachery is this? What spell you cast?

NIMUE:
No spell, but Justice long delayed, now due.
The waters claim what rightfully is theirs.
The scabbard returns to lake from whence it came;
The scrolls of wisdom to their proper home.
And you, proud sorcerer who thought to master

Forces beyond your comprehension's reach,
Shall learn humility in water's cold embrace.

The waters rise around MERLIN's feet, seeming to grab at him.

MERLIN:
You cannot hold me! My work remains undone!
Arthur's dream must not die with Camelot!

NIMUE:
Arthur's dream was never yours to shape.
The once and future King will come again,
When Britain's need is greatest, soul most wounded.
But you shall wait in crystal cave entombed,
In ageless sleep where dreams and visions flow,
Until the Wheel completes its fated turn.

The waters rise further. MERLIN struggles but cannot escape.

MERLIN:
(As he is pulled into the lake)
This is not ending, merely transformation!
What I have set in motion shall unfold!
The old gods die! Reason's light prevails!

NIMUE:
Sleep now, Merlin. Learn in dreams what Waking
Could not teach your proud, unbending mind.
The Balance reasserts, as it must always:
Old and New, in endless dance entwined.

MERLIN disappears beneath the waters. The scabbard floats on the surface. NIMUE takes it gently.

NIMUE:
*(Soliloquy, l*ooking at the scabbard with sorrow)
Too late this healing power returns to hand.
The threads of Fate draw tight around their doom:
Arthur's wound and Mordred's rage now set
Beyond what even this magic might undo.
This Sacred Vessel must await a purer heart:
A Knight unborn, who seeks not power but healing.

For now, the lake shall guard what men have squandered,
Until a worthier age might claim its gift.
One player leaves the stage, yet drama continues.
The sword and scabbard sundered; King incomplete;
The son and father moving toward confrontation;
The priestess caught between Love's competing claims.
The pattern, woven long before their births,
Approaches final threads in tapestry dark.
Yet hope remains while breath remains to draw,
While choices still present themselves to make.
Morgana seeks to change what was foretold;
Perhaps her love might turn the tide of blood.
Or perhaps the doom prophesied must come;
For, some wheels, once turning, stop for no hand.

Exit NIMUE into the lake with the scabbard.

SCENE IV

An open field. Two armies face each other. On one side, ARTHUR with LANCELOT, GAWAIN, and loyal Knights. On the other, MORDRED with rebellious forces. MORGANA stands between them, attempting reconciliation.

MORGANA:
(Pleading)
My son! My brother! Sheathe your naked blades!
What cause is served by kinsmen's bloody strife?
The kingdom tears itself like wounded beast,
While Saxon wolves watch hungry at our borders!

MORDRED:
(Bitterly)
What kingdom, mother? One built on lies?
On brother lying with sister, unknowing?
On son denied his name and heritage?
On Christian face masking pagan heart?
Let such deception fall by honest sword!

ARTHUR:
Mordred, hear me! Whatever wrongs were done,

Were done *t o* us, not *b y* us in knowledge!
We stand as victims of another's schemes
—Not villains who deserve your righteous rage!

MORDRED:
Yet you, great King, once truth was plainly told,
Still looked on me with horror poorly masked.
Still saw the living emblem of your shame,
—The Prophecy made flesh, to end your reign.

ARTHUR:
I saw a mirror of my younger self:
A face that might have grown beside my own
—Had truth been known, and kinship recognized.
The horror was for years forever lost
—Not for the blood that binds us, son to sire.

MORDRED:
(*With bitter laugh)*
Such pretty words, when armies face each other!
Too late for tender claims of fatherhood,
When power hangs in balance on field of war.
What might have been belongs to dreams, not deeds;
What stands before us now is kingdom's fate.

ARTHUR:
That moment's shock spoke, not my deeper heart!
Return to Court; take place as prince acknowledged.
Together we might build a truer realm,
Where Old and New stand reconciled at last.

MORDRED:
Too late! The time for hollow words has passed!
I claim by blood what was denied by fraud
—The throne of Britain, rightfully my own!

MORGANA:
(In desperation)
My son, this path leads only to destruction!
I'ye seen the visions, dark with flowing blood!
Father and son fallen by mutual wounds;
The kingdom shattered beyond Hope's repair!

MORDRED:
Then so be it! Better honest ruin,
Than gilded lies that mask Corruption's heart!

MORGANA turns to ARTHUR.

MORGANA:
Brother, yield the crown to save the land!
Go to Avalon, take healing's path.
Return when wounds of spirit find their cure,
When Britain calls again for Arthur's strength!

ARTHUR:
(Torn)
I cannot yield what Sacred Oath has bound.
The King exists to serve the kingdom's need,
Not flee when challenges grow dark and deep.
What ruler would I be to place my life
Above the realm I swore to guard and guide?

LANCELOT:
My Lord, perhaps a compromise might serve
—Shared regency until these wounds heal over,
A council where both sides find equal voice.

MORDRED:
(Laughing harshly)
The famous Lancelot suggests compromise!
Tell us, O noble Knight, of compromise
Between your oath to King and love for Queen!

Shocked silence. ARTHUR stares at LANCELOT.

ARTHUR:
What means this poisoned barb so casually thrown?

MORDRED:
Ask then your Queen! And ask your trusted Knight:
How often Duty yields to Heart's desire!
Your Court rots from its core to outer edge,
With fairest face concealing foulest deeds!

ARTHUR:
(To LANCELOT)
Is there truth in this accusation stark?

LANCELOT cannot meet his eyes.

MORGANA:
(Desperately)
Enough! These matters can be addressed in peace,
Not on battlefield with armies poised!
A truce, I beg you both! A day to think,
To cool hot blood and find path to accord!

A momentary hesitation. Then ARTHUR slowly nods.

ARTHUR:
Though words come hard between us, nephew-son,
Let blood not spill where reason might prevail.

MORDRED:
Blood speaks already in my veins, my Lord,
A voice divided ‘twixt your rule and mine.
Yet I would hear what terms you might propose.

MORDRED looks to his assembled forces, then back to ARTHUR with calculated confidence.

MORDRED:
The one true God stands witness to my right;
And Truth, long buried, rises to my side.
What harm in one day’s pause, before I claim
What Destiny and bloodright mark as mine?
I grant this grace, not from uncertainty,
But from the strength of one who knows his cause.

ARTHUR:
A day’s truce then. Let no blood be shed,
While Reason still might find its struggling voice.

MORDRED considers, then reluctantly nods.

MORDRED:
Until tomorrow’s dawn, let weapons rest.

But after, if no path presents itself,
Let sword determine what words cannot solve.

The armies begin to withdraw. A Knight in MORDRED's forces suddenly drops his helmet with a loud clang. He stoops quickly, drawing his sword to help retrieve it. The sun catches on the blade, flashing brightly.

KNIGHT IN ARTHUR'S FORCES:
(*Pointing with alarm*)
See there! Steel drawn, during sacred truce!
Treachery from Mordred's rebel ranks!

Confusion erupts. MORDRED turns, raising his hands to call for calm.

MORDRED:
Stay! 'Tis but a fallen helm! No treachery!

ARTHUR:
A fallen helm; a fallen kingdom; both
—Small accidents, that usher greater Falls.

But his words are lost, as Knights on both sides draw weapons. Chaos erupts. Despite ARTHUR, MORGANA, and MORDRED's cries for calm, the armies surge forward. Battle commences.

MORGANA:
(Screaming)
Stop! In the Goddess's name, I command you stop!

But her voice is lost in battle's roar. ARTHUR and MORDRED are swept apart by fighting. MORGANA stands helpless, as the Prophecy unfolds around her.

Time passes, indicated by lighting change. The battlefield is strewn with dead and dying. ARTHUR and MORDRED face each other, both wounded.

ARTHUR:
It has come to this, as Fate decreed.
Father and son, bound in tragic dance.

MORDRED:
(Bitterly)
“Father”? You spoke such words with royal calm,
When first this truth emerged in guarded Halls.
But what are words, when actions tell the tale?
You offered recognition, not embrace;
Acknowledged blood, but kept your distance still.
Now death approaches, and you claim the bond
That never found its proper warmth in life.

ARTHUR:
I never found the strength to speak that truth.
The crown’s weight silenced what my heart should claim.
Too much was asked of both of us, too fast.

MORDRED:
Perhaps in some next life, we‘ll meet as strangers,
Unburdened by Prophecy’s heavy chains.

ARTHUR:
I would welcome such kind chance, my son.

They fight. Despite ARTHUR's greater skill, MORDRED lands a grievous blow. As ARTHUR falls, he thrusts Excalibur through MORDRED’s chest. Both lie dying as MORGANA rushes to them.

MORGANA:
(Cradling both)
My son! My brother! What madness claims you both?

MORDRED:
(Weakly)
Mother… I never knew your love till too late.
Forgive… the anger that consumed my heart.

MORGANA:
Nothing to forgive, my precious child.
The fault was never yours, but Fate’s design.

MORDRED dies in her arms. She turns to ARTHUR.

ARTHUR:
Sister… the kingdom falls, as was foretold.
My dream of justice dies on bloody field.

MORGANA:
Not dies, but sleeps until a better time.
I'll take you to Avalon to heal these wounds.
The Ancient Arts may yet preserve your life.

ARTHUR:
And Excalibur's scabbard? Its healing power?
It is but gone… since Merlin took it hence.

MORGANA:
Nimue has reclaimed it from Merlin's grasp,
But tells me it must rest within the Lake.
The time for sword and scabbard's union passed,
When blood was spilled that cannot be undone.
It waits now for another hand, in time to come,
When purer heart shall seek what we have lost.
(To approaching KNIGHTS)
Help me, to bear the King to waiting barge!
He journeys to Avalon for healing deep.

KNIGHTS lift ARTHUR carefully.

ARTHUR:
(To LANCELOT, who approaches)
Old friend… despite what's passed between us…
Take Excalibur. Return it to the lake.
Its purpose ends with kingdom's sundering Fall.

LANCELOT:
(Taking the sword with tears)
I shall, my king. And seek forgiveness after,
Through lifelong penance for my heart's betrayal.

ARTHUR:
(Faintly)
Tell Guinevere… the child must be protected.
The future sleeps within that innocent form.

ARTHUR is carried off. MORGANA turns to face the battlefield.

MORGANA:
(Soliloquy)
So ends and yet begins the Pendragon tale.
My brother sleeps in Avalon's misty care;
My son lies cold upon Ambition's field.
The Round Table shatters like crystal dropped;
Its noble Knights now scattered to the winds.
Camelot will fall to Saxon hands,
Its glories fading into bardic tale.
Yet something of its dream remains alive:
A child unborn with Pendragon blood;
A sword returning to its watery home;
A King who sleeps but shall awaken yet,
When Britain's Need grows greatest, Hope most dim.
I shall withdraw to Avalon's sacred shores,
To guard these embers of a fire once bright.
The Wheel turns on, as it has always done:
From Glory to Decay, from Death to Birth.
The Old Religion fades to whispered Myth,
Yet never dies while memory remains.
I came to heal the rifts in Britain's soul,
Yet found those chasms deeper than my art.
Some wounds need centuries, not days, to close;
Some truths need ages, not moments, to emerge.
I am Morgana, priestess, sister, mother
—Not villain History may paint in later days,
But woman caught in Fate's unyielding grasp,
Who loved too well a brother and a son.
Remember this when tales are told at night,
When Arthur's glory shines through Legend's veil:
His sister sought to save, not to destroy,
To heal the wound that never fully closed.

Exit MORGANA, as mists rise to obscure the stage.

EPILOGUE

Time: the present. The edge of the lake at Avalon. MORGANA, now aged, stands watching the mists. NIMUE rises from the waters.

NIMUE:
The years have weathered thee, but not thy spirit.
Still thou watchest for the promised dawn.

MORGANA:
I keep my Vigil, as the Old Ways fade.
The Christian crosses rise on sacred groves;
The new God's servants claim the ancient sites.
Arthur sleeps —his wound beyond my healing—
Waiting for the time of his return.

NIMUE:
And what of thee, last priestess of thy line?
What fate awaits, as mortal years grow short?

MORGANA:
I pass into the Mist, like all before.
My name will darken into villainy,
My love for brother twisted into schemes,
My efforts to preserve transformed to plots.
So be it —Truth sleeps beneath such tales,
As Arthur sleeps beneath Avalon's care.

NIMUE:
Not all tales paint thee dark. Some bards remember
The healing gifts, the Wisdom freely shared.

MORGANA:
Cold comfort when my son lies long in earth,
My brother lost in sleep beyond my reach,
The dream we might have built together shattered.

NIMUE:
Yet dream persists through Time's relentless flow.
The once and future King shall rise again,
When ancient powers stir from slumber long.

And thou shalt have thy place in that awakening,
Though changed in form as water shapes to vessel.

MORGANA:
Until that distant day, I guard what remains:
The memory of a kingdom almost great;
A brother almost wise; a son almost known.
In shadows of these almosts, I find peace,
And wait for Wheel's full turning, long delayed.

NIMUE:
Come now into the lake. Thy Watch concludes.
Let waters bear thee to thy brother's side
—Where healing touch, at last, might reach you both.

NIMUE extends her hand. After a moment's hesitation, MORGANA takes it and steps into the water.

MORGANA:
(As she descends into the lake)
Remember us not as we were, but might have been
—A family whole, a kingdom justly ruled,
Where Old and New found harmony, not strife.
Remember Arthur not as perfect king,
But human soul who strove toward distant light.
Remember Mordred not as villain born,
But child of powers greater than himself.
And if you would remember me at all,
Recall a woman caught between two Worlds,
Who loved too deeply those she could not save.

MORGANA disappears beneath the waters. The mists thicken, then slowly clear to reveal the lake empty and still. A distant church bell tolls.

Lights fade to darkness.

THE END

About the author

With a passion for ancient Greek literature, Chris is exploring the intricate realms of ancient lyric poetry, ancient drama, philosophy, historiography and linguistics. Some of his other influences include the French operatic works of the 17th - 18th century, Shakespeare, Victorian poetry, the French symbolism movement and its influence on modern Greek poetry, Greek poets such as Lorentzos Mavilis, Kostis Palamas, Konstantinos Hatzopoulos & Angelos Sikelianos, and translators of classical works such as Thrasyvoulos Stavrou & Ioannis Gryparis.

He has first published «*Βελλεροφόντης*» ("*Bellerophon*"), as an adaptation of the work with the same title by N. J. Spyropoulos. With this lyrical theatre drama, written in Modern Greek verse, Tsirkas attempts to breathe new life into the ancient myth of Bellerophon, with his poetic skills and his understanding of the tragic.

Further adding to his literary repertoire, Tsirkas has tackled the timeless work of Euripides with his edition of «*Βάκχες*» ("*Bacchae*"). In this endeavor, he presents the original text with a side-by-side metrical translation and a commentary & analysis in Modern Greek. This contribution reflects his commitment in trying to make classical works accessible and engaging for contemporary readers of a broader audience.

In the tragic domain, Tsirkas has ventured into the realm of «*Μέδουσα*» ("*Medusa*"). This attempted reconstruction of a classical Attic tragedy, in classical Attic verse, bears the imprint of his deep appreciation for ancient dramatic traditions. With a translation and commentary in Modern Greek, he invites readers to explore the nuances of his tragic narrative.

Adding to his growing body of work, Chris then turned his attention to the classical myth of «*Ἀντιόπη*» ("*Antiope*"). This new adaptation, written in English verse in 2024 and lately translated to Greek theatrical speech, seeks to capture the essence of Euripides' fragmented play, weaving together the scattered pieces with precision and poetic sensitivity. Through meticulous research and creative interpretation, Tsirkas breathes new life into the myth of Antiope, offering a fresh perspective on her tragic story. His version of "*Antiope*" includes a detailed commentary and analysis, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the ancient text and of its timeless, enduring themes. This work stands as a testament to his dedication in preserving and revitalizing classical Greek literature for modern audiences.

His work "*Tragedy - Logos, Rhythm and Psyche*" («*Τραγωδία - Λόγος, Ρυθμός και Ψυχή*»), written in Greek, explores the linguistic, rhythmic and psychological dimensions of attic Tragedy. Examining elements like metrics, language and choral odes, this book bridges ancient and modern worlds, with a nuanced look at the enduring power of Tragedy.

In his ongoing exploration of the tragic form, Tsirkas has also undertaken a bold and innovative project, which aims to bridge Eastern and Western theatrical traditions. His work, "*The Veils of the Seven Skies*", merges the structure and philosophical depth of Attic tragedy with the refined aesthetic and performative precision of Chinese Opera; thus, creating a unique synthesis of two seemingly distant but profoundly resonant artistic worlds. Through this endeavor, he seeks to illuminate the universal themes that bind human expression across cultures, demonstrating how ancient forms can converse

in a shared theatrical language, transcending time and geography.

In his ambitious Shakespearean drama "*Morgana: A Tragedy in Five Acts*" (2025), Tsirkas boldly reimagines the Arthurian legend from the perspective of Arthur's sister, traditionally cast as the villain. Drawing on his deep understanding of classical tragedy and poetic verse, he transforms Morgana into a complex protagonist caught between ancient pagan wisdom and emerging Christian faith. The play explores how Merlin's manipulations and hidden truths about Mordred's parentage ultimately doom Camelot's promise. Through rich Shakespearean language and carefully crafted character development, Tsirkas challenges audiences to reconsider the traditional narrative, suggesting that Camelot's fall stemmed not from villainy but from the failure to reconcile old wisdom with new ideals. This work continues his pattern of breathing new life into ancient stories —while exploring timeless themes of power, family and competing worldviews.

In addition to his work on classical literature, Chris is experimenting with modern genres such as symphonic metal, exploring how these contemporary styles can interact with and reflect the reception of Attic tragedy. Utilizing artificial intelligence, he creates innovative tracks that blend the dramatic intensity of ancient Greek theatre with the powerful, evocative sounds of symphonic metal and other, modern music genres. This fusion of old and new not only brings a fresh dimension to his creative endeavors but also aims to connect the rich traditions of the past with the dynamic expressions of modern music.

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